

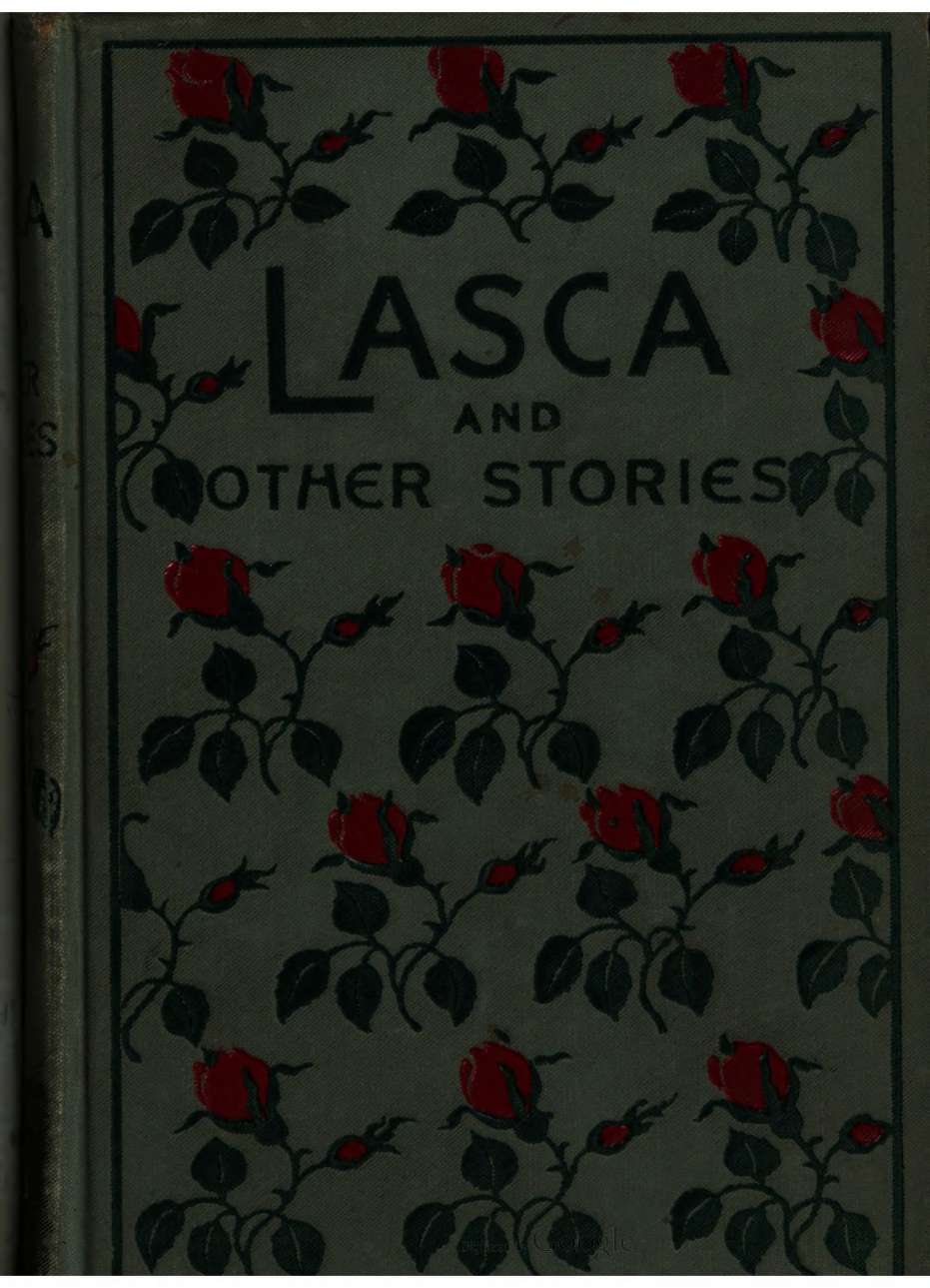
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# LASCA

AND  
OTHER STORIES

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# LASCA,

AND

OTHER STORIES.

BY

MARY F. NIXON, [Mrs ROULET]

AUTHOR OF

"WITH A PESSIMIST IN SPAIN," "BLUE LADY'S KNIGHT,"  
"A HARP OF MANY CHORDS."

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SECOND EDITION.

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— BECKTOLD —  
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ST. LOUIS, MO.

TO  
MY AUNT,  
MARY JEWELL MERMOD,  
THE "FAIRY-GOD-MOTHER" OF MY CHILDHOOD.



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Several of the stories in this volume were published in the Ave Maria, Donahoes' Magazine, Godeys and Short Stories, and are reprinted here by the courtesy of the Editors.

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## L A S C A .

IT was not in the "quartier Latin" but next door to it and every one knows just where it is too. "Quarante cinq Rue La Grande" — why "La Grande" nobody did know. The street was narrow, the houses high. One higher than the rest frowned down upon them. This was the one that had Jean Boullé's bake shop. Perhaps because Jean's buns were good and two for *cinq sous*, perhaps because the top of the house had a skylight, M'sieur lived there.

Who was M'sieur? *Ciel!* how do I know?

He was a painter named Heywood but everybody called him "M'sieur," that's all I know.

Who am I? I might say I don't know that either. One changes every seven years, and I am seven times seven. I'm another painter, and I was—but this story is not about me, but M'sieur and Mademoiselle Fetherston and—Lasca.

I had half of M'sieur's studio and painted every day. We had often the same models.

M'sieur was tall, and strong, and dark; English, very English.

Most Englishmen have no atmosphere, they cannot paint; they have nothing dainty. But M'sieur could paint. He had travelled much; Europe, l'Afrique, l'Amérique, all he painted. I have travelled too, when I saw M'sieur's pictures. They made one feel the places.

One day I came to the studio and found M'sieur painting at a strange picture.

Miss Fetherston — *Dieu!* the names these Americans have — sat near, modeling. She was a pupil of M'sieur's learning to sculp. How? You say not "to sculp"? what then? "Sculpture." Ah; *peste* on the first Englishman! French is civilized, why cannot all speak it?

But M'sieur's picture? It was a large canvas, a stretch of dull brown prairie with long waving grass. A herd of fierce cattle was in the distance, their leader tossing his horns madly. A dark, black cloud overhung the blue sky. In the foreground was a pony, what call you him, Mustard? No, Mustang. A man was in the saddle, and a woman's form

was dimly outlined as if she was about to spring behind the man. That was all. It was only roughly sketched in, but there was something odd about the picture. There was power in every hurried stroke of the brush, a subtle undercurrent that filled you with a fierce wild longing for freedom.

Just as I entered the room that June day M'sieur flung down his brush.

"I'll never do it!" he said impatiently.

"What make you?" I asked, laying my hand on his shoulder; M'sieur and I were good friends—then.

"Ah! you!" he said, turning his head. He had been too absorbed to see me when I entered. He continued, "I can never paint this picture, I cannot find a model for Lasca."

"What is it?" I asked. "There is a story to it?"

"Yes," he answered, "a Texas story, of the great Norther, a wind storm they have over there. The cattle flee from it and any one caught before them is trampled to death. The only chance for life is to shoot your horse, get under his body and let the herd dash over you. The story is of a Texan ranger and his sweetheart; how they fled

before the storm and cattle, how the mustang fell and the girl flung herself on her lover's breast, dying to save him." M'sieur's eyes had kindled as he spoke, and his face flushed. "There's a poem about it," he added, "and my picture is where it says:

" 'Was that thunder? I grasped the cord  
Of my swift mustang without a word ;  
I sprang to the saddle, she swung behind  
Away! for a hot chase down the wind.' "

"*Bon?*" I cried. M'sieur had a way with him, "un attrait;" what you say? Charm. He interested every one.

"But why cannot you paint it?" I asked.

He flung back a lock of curly hair which always tumbled into his eyes and frowned.

"I cannot get a model for the girl. 'Lasca,' her name is, and she's an ideal. All love and self-sacrifice for the man she loved and no 'patient Griselda' business either; plenty of fire and temper."

"Ma foi, M'sieur! One would think you could find 'fire and temper' enough in the Latin quarter," I laughed. M'sieur frowned deeper, and shook his head.

"I don't want that kind of fire. It burns out. This woman loved '*à la mort.*' If I

could find her" — he stopped abruptly, as a voice said:

"Perhaps M'sieur would try me?"

Both of us turned quickly, and saw such a tiny little figure. Slight she was yet somehow not thin—the curves were too beautifully rounded to give any impression of bones. A cloud of hair, real "cendré", that shade between chestnut and golden which we French admire more than your taffy English locks; dark, straight brows; a pair of gray-blue eyes, fringed in black; a pale skin; full red lips, which drooped at the corners; all this we saw as she stood before us.

"Who are you?" demanded M'sieur.

"Lasca, if M'sieur will," she said demurely, though there was a gleam of mischief in her eyes.

"Child," he said impatiently, "you can't pose for Lasca. She was dark and wild and fierce almost. You're the right size, but pshaw! you haven't the force. No blonde women have any 'go' in them."

"Have they not, M'sieur?" There was a mocking ring in her voice. Her eyes had a strange little expression. "M'sieur knows, without doubt," she added, "but perhaps M'sieur would show me the pose he wants."



She was so persistent that Heywood almost crossly consented.

He pulled down an old Mexican bridle, fastened it to a post, and said:

"The man is mounted. Grab the bridle, put one foot on his toe and start to swing to the saddle. Jove!" he exclaimed, "that's it exactly."

The child—she seemed scarcely more than that—flung her lithe little body into the very position. There was something startling in her tense pose. Then, "Will I do, M'sieur?" she asked inquiringly.

"Do! I should think you would," he said.

"What's your name," he asked again.

"Lasca," she answered coolly.

With a shrug, he began to paint.

That commenced it. Every day she came and posed, an old woman waiting for her in the corner like a dragon. Heywood painted like mad.

"I'm afraid she'll disappear in a flash as she came," he said.

Miss Fetherston also came each day for lessons. It seemed to me she taught as well as learned.

M'sieur often asked her questions, and she

gave advice freely. She was tall and slim and dark. I thought her cold and like her own statues. But M'sieur—well, M'sieur had a theory that dark women were worth winning and blondes were cold. A man with a theory has no eyes.

The winter passed, and the new model came and stayed. I painted hard too, for the Salon came soon, and I was ambitious—then.

One day Miss Fetherston had a red rose in her gown, and M'sieur said 'twas like those in her cheeks. She looked at him in her slow, sleepy way and smiled. I glanced at Lasca, and saw—but I dared not think what I saw for in an instant, she too smiled, a strange little smile.

The studio was full of trash. Old armor, draperies, Oriental stuffs, half-finished pictures, sketches, bits of furniture, all were crowded together into a *mélange*.

Miss Fetherston sat in a high-backed chair, resting. Lasca—we knew no other name for her—was curled on a divan, her strange little face in curious contrast to the brilliant hues in which she was draped. I was smoking, “cela va sans dire.” Heywood was talking his theory; that also “goes without saying.”

"There was never a blonde woman with any 'go' in her," he repeated for the hundredth time.

Miss Fetherston smiled, well pleased, Lasca sat up.

"That depends upon where one is to go and with whom," she said.

"Does it, *Petite?*" M'sieur always treated the little waif like a child.

"What would you do for the man you loved?" he asked.

"Die," she said laconically.

"That wouldn't do him a great amount of good," said Miss Fetherston.

Lasca's eyes flashed and she bit her lip.

"It might," was all she said.

Then M'sieur, spoke.

"Lasca, could you be jealous?"

"Perhaps, M'sieur," she replied. "Why?"

"There's another picture I'd like you to pose for; the Texan said he made her 'jealous for fun,' and in a flash she drew her dagger on him. Can you try it?"

M'sieur always said no model could pose really well unless she felt the meaning of the picture. That was another of his theories.

Lasca sprang up saying, "I can try,

M'sieur," as she draped the Mexican serape round her, tied a brilliant sash about her waist, and thrust a jewelled dagger in her girdle.

As she started to pose, Miss Fetherston came near her.

"You have it not right," she said, as she gave the serape a pull. Just then, M'sieur too, arranged the drapery. His hand touched hers. A look passed between them.

Lasca saw. Like a flash she drew the dagger, her eyes black with anger, her expression fierce; then she caught herself up quickly.

"Lasca! What acting!" cried M'sieur, "your pose, your expression was perfect!"

"Thank you, M'sieur," she said in a subdued voice. She was very pale. She caught my eye.

"I do not like women," she said in apology. "I like them not to touch me."

Miss Fetherston shrugged her shoulders and looked amused.

M'sieur painted. Artists may have an eye for color but they see not other things.

\*     \*     \*

The winter was gone and the spring came. It was beautiful in Paris. Everything seemed new again after all the cold and the dark of the winter.

My Salon picture was accepted and well hung. And M'sieur? His picture of Lasca was a "Médaille," and every body talked of it. Such atmosphere, such masterly handling of a difficult subject! Such a wonderful model, a pose so natural and spirited! These were the favorable criticisms and M'sieur was the envy of us all.

We were young then. It's a wonderful thing to be young. It means so much; life and light and—Lasca.

One day M'sieur said to Lasca:

"You've made me famous, *Petite*."

She smiled radiantly.

"Will you pose again?" he asked.

"When M'sieur wishes," she said, her eyelids down.

"Thank you, *bonne petite*" and he laid his hand carelessly on her hair.

The little proud head drooped.

"For whom else do you pose?" he asked suddenly.

"M'sieur, for no one," she said quickly.

"No?" he was surprised. "Have you plenty of money, child?" abruptly.

"M'sieur!" the one word said a volume of indignation.

"I beg your pardon," he said, and Lasca went swiftly away. I had noticed the old hag who came with her always pocketed the daily fee that Heywood gave to Lasca.

"She doesn't seem like a grisette. I wonder who she is?" said M'sieur. It was his first remark about her. She was "only a model" to him. As for me, I was not always old, I could see beyond my palette, and I had no theories.

Next day Miss Fetherston took a vacation. She was gone two weeks. *Dieu!* what a fortnight. Lasca was a different creature. She posed like an angel or a Greek goddess. She danced the gavotte. She sang to the mandolin, in a sweet soprano voice; songs with a note of passion or an undertone of sadness. They made hot tears scorch my eyes. Even M'sieur looked surprised. He never again said "blonde women are tiresome."

Lasca was happy. She expanded before our very eyes as a rose yields to the sun, till its pure heart lies wide open to the bold fellow's gaze.

Ah! Lasca! little pure heart, little Southern rose, where are you now?

One day it was June, a bright, glorious, sunny June, such as we had when I was young, — Junes seem old and cold now. She was especially gay and her merry sallies kept us both in shouts of laughter. It was better laughter than one hears always near the "quartier Latin." Finally, painting at an end, she flung her tiny form down on the big couch in which she seemed lost. One little foot tapped the floor, such a dainty foot with its high-arched instep. Her hair was pushed loosely back, her sweet eyes were dark, her cheeks flushed and brilliant. She was laughing at M'sieur for some awkward move he made with his maul-stick, when the door opened.

"A letter for M'sieur," a voice said.

Heywood's face changed. He took the letter and opening it, read eagerly.

Lasca watched him, and I, — I watched Lasca. Her face changed too. As the sunset glow passes from the sky when night comes, all the pretty color faded from her cheeks. Then M'sieur spoke like a big school boy planning a holiday. These English are *canaille*, I think.

"No more painting to-day! Old man, congratulate me. Lasca, I must tell you something. Miss Fetherston has promised to marry me. She is coming back to-morrow."

I glanced at Lasca. She was white to the lips but struggling bravely for self-command. I spoke hastily.

"I congratulate you M'sieur, and Mademoiselle as well," talking on as best I could. Then Lasca spoke.

"And M'sieur, I wish you joy, and — Mademoiselle." There was a catch in her voice but she coughed and hid it. "M'sieur will not need me to-day? *Au revoir*," and she glided out of the room.

The next day she came not. Miss Fetherston was there, calm, stately and beautiful. She took as a matter of course M'sieur's homage which like all Englishmen when in love, he lavished freely.

*Les Américaines* are strange women!

Again the next day Lasca came not. M'sieur chafed. He wished to paint. Love is sweet but Art is Master. The third day she came, so white, so fragile, the cruel black shadows under the great gray eyes.

"M'sieur will pardon, I was ill," she said



deprecatingly to Heywood's somewhat surly greeting. An artist when he is crossed is truly a spoiled child. Lasca posed again and Mademoiselle Fetherston criticized rather freely.

"You have not wished me joy yet," she said to Lasca one day.

Lasca's eyes flashed peculiarly.

"I wished it to M'sieur," she said, "if you love him you prefer he should have it."

"You're a strange child," said Mademoiselle.

Two weeks more, and then came the wedding. The bride and groom were to go to Normandy for a month's vacation.

"After that I want you to pose again, Lasca," said M'sieur, the day before the wedding.

"Yes, M'sieur?" Lasca's voice had the pretty little inflection of a question.

"Yes, *Petite*," he said, "you're the best model I ever had. Good-bye," and he held out his hand.

She raised her poor little white face and looked at him once, a long, long look.

"Good-bye," she said and stooping swiftly she kissed his hand,—once—twice—thrice—

then, skimming like a bird on the wing, was gone from the room.

M'sieur rubbed his hand on his velvet jacket and looked foolish.

"Jove! what a tempest," he said.

"Blonde women have no go," I said drily.

Next day was the wedding. At Notre Dame was the Mass, and I went. The church was crowded, though few noticed the quiet ceremony. M'sieur and Miss Fetherston were too taken up with themselves to see the wee white face I saw in the crowd.

The Mass over M'sieur and his bride turned to leave the church.

What was that noise? A roar as if from wild beasts, and in an instant all was confusion.

"Socialists," was the cry. "Vallinski and his twelve!" Women screamed and fainted; men fought their way to the door; blows resounded; oaths were heard.

I looked for Lasca and caught a glimpse of her close to M'sieur. I pushed to his tall form as he struggled toward the great door. He was supporting his wife and was pale with anger, she with fright.

"Down with priests and their worshippers!"

cried the socialists. One remembered the Commune and the twenty-second of May.

Then came the police and the fight became fiercer. I saw Heywood strike a man a blow, exclaiming, "Keep off the lady, can't you!"

The wretch uttered a frightful oath and cried, "*Sacré bleu!* I can but I will not!"

An instant, there was a gleam of steel, a flash, a woman's fearful shriek of agony, and I could see no more. I forced my way to them and reached M'sieur just as he stepped through the portico. He was carrying something in his arms. His wife *was* hurt, then? He kneeled in the porch supporting on his knees, *Mon Dieu!*—Lasca!

The tumult was stilled and the police had control. Madame Heywood kneeled beside her husband. Lasca, cold and still, lay in his arms.

"Is she dead?" I asked faintly.

She opened her eyes and saw nothing but the face bending over her. She smiled a smile of perfect bliss.

"How did it happen?" I whispered.

In choked tones Madame Heywood answered, "A man drew his dagger and tried to kill

me. She flung herself between. He stabbed her."

"A priest! quick!" cried Heywood.

Then Lasca spoke feebly, for the blood came in great gushes from the wound in her breast.

"I saved her for you," she gasped, "I told you, I could die for *him*! I always loved you. Will you kiss me just once?"

M'sieur bent his face and pressed his lips to hers. Lasca raised a tiny white hand and patted his cheek feebly.

"It is very sweet — to — die — for — you," she murmured, and with that perfect smile upon her lips—she died.

\* \* \*

The journal next day had a small notice.

"A number of Socialists, headed by Vallinski, a Pole, broke into the church of Notre Dame yesterday and came to blows with the worshippers. Doubiniska Vallinski, the young daughter of the ring-leader, was fatally stabbed."

That is all.

M'sieur? you ask where is M'sieur? I do not know. He and Madame are no more my friends. I do not like people that resemble

statues, and the English are *canaille*! And I? I am old and that was twenty years ago. What do I do? Nothing. I paint, and smoke, and think, and dream of — perhaps — of — Lasca.



## THE QUALITY OF MERCY.

PEOPLE said that Christine Jordan had no heart, but there were some who knew differently, and her most intimate friend once said, "She has one, but it is all encrusted with ice, and she is awaiting her Andree to discover it."

Roger Stirling had long since applied for the position but hitherto unsuccessfully, and he heard the news that his regiment was ordered South with a heavy sinking of the heart.

"I joined the dear old First for the fun," he said to himself, "and I can't go back on her now and show the white feather; but I do wish Christine would say 'yes' before I go. I don't understand her. Sometimes she almost yields, and I'm sure she cares for me. She's like a snow-white lily with a heart of gold, but she keeps the heart closely veiled from me!" and the strong man sighed as he prepared for dress parade.

The First was under marching orders; it's men were to meet at the Armory, parade to

the Park, be speechified and bored generally, and that night to leave for Camp, *en route* to Cuba or Puerto Rico, no one knew which.

Captain Stirling was one of the best officers in the regiment, a martinet for duty, severe in discipline and thoroughly respected by the men.

He was a tall, broad-shouldered fellow, with keen dark eyes, a clear skin, firm lips under a dark moustache and a square chin which gave a stern look to his face.

A clean limbed, well groomed, soldierly looking fellow, yet a man to be respected rather than loved, and Christine Jordan hardly knew whether she feared or loved him.

He was so proud, so upright, with so fine a scorn of anything weak or mean! She wondered if he knew her faults and despised her for them? She had weaknesses, and she hated herself for them. A lie—a genuine lie which would harm another—would have been an impossibility to her, but an occasional lapse in the direction of white fibs was so much easier for her than to hurt people's feelings.

The unvarnished truth seemed brutal at times but he—oh, he would run down a

whole phalanx of other people's feelings if he deemed it his duty, she thought.

He made a fetich of Duty! He was going to this horrid war from a sense of duty, and he'd go if it pulled her very heart strings out. It would make him harder than ever, she supposed. He was the last man in the world to whom such influences were necessary, and here Christine sighed as deeply as had her lover, and prepared to witness the grand review.

Wild was the enthusiasm displayed as the First, familiarly called "the Kid Gloves", performed wonders of drilling.

"Platoons", "By Fours," "Guide right," "Fours into line—" these and many other mysteries were enacted with ease and skill, and the handsome Colonel—brave officer of Volunteers in the Civil war—glanced proudly down his line.

It came toward him, a solid phalanx, when suddenly, there was a break—a rush—a figure from Company K dashed right under the hoofs of the Colonel's horse, snatched up something from the ground, paused, and returned to its place in the ranks amidst deafening cheers from the by-standers.



A tiny child, heedless of restraint, had broken from its mother's grasp and was almost beneath the horse's feet, when Roger Stirling caught it.

The crowd cheered but the Colonel frowned. It was a breach of discipline!

An hour later Roger packed his portmanteau in silence, when a dishevelled messenger boy made his appearance.

"Bin lookin all over fer ye," he said breathlessly. "Got ter hev an answer," mindful of the silver dollar which awaited him upon his return to the handsome house which over-looked the Lake.

"I would like to see you before you go—Christine," was all the note said, but the Captain's face flushed darkly as he read, and he answered only, "I am coming, my Own, my Sweet!"

Pale but very lovely she was as she came toward him down the long drawing room, and the soft candle light gleamed upon her, and seemed to gather her up in its flame.

He had never seen her look so beautiful, and as her hand touched his he lost all the stern self-control which he had always put upon himself when in her presence.

How madly he loved her, from the halo of her corn-colored hair to the slender foot peeping from beneath her white gown!

"You sent for me?" he said eagerly, holding her hand firmly, his eyes saying all sorts of tumultuously tender things, their intensity causing her breath to come and go, and the vivid color to rise in her sea-shell cheeks.

"Yes," she faltered, "I wanted you—"

"For *once* you wanted me? I have wanted you long—I want you always—all my life," he whispered warmly, bending to look deeply into the blue eyes timidly raised to his.

The sweet gaze drooped and one soft, warm arm stole about his neck, and then he clasped her close, close to him and as his cheek gently touched the soft masses of hair upon his breast, there was a mighty silence.

"Why did you decide to take me at the last?" he asked at length, his stern face transfigured with happiness, as he drew her to the couch beside him.

"It was this afternoon," she hesitated a little. "They said you would be under arrest or—or something for breaking the ranks, and I couldn't bear to have you unhappy. But it was because of that baby

most of all. I—I've loved you for a long time, Roger, but you seemed always so cold and stern. Everybody said that you were a martinet for duty and a little hard and I was afraid, for I think men should be tender as well as strong. But to-day when I saw you risk so much for that baby—oh, it wasn't only the courage—any man has that—but it was the way you kissed her as you put her into her mother's arms—it made me know that you were all I wished you to be. I wanted to tell you so Roger, and that I—I love you!" How true and sweet was the glance raised to his and there was a suspicious moisture in his eyes as he said:

"You're right; I am a stern, hard fellow, but your love will make me better, dearest," and he stooped, and with a quiet reverence kissed the gentle lips which uttered words so womanly and so sweet.

Then came the parting, hard, bitterly hard, and yet not bitter for she gave him only brave, bright words and tender glances for his accolade.

"Good-bye," she whispered, as he held her fast, a great pain within his eyes, for this new-found love was very sweet, and part-

ing owned such horrors of uncertainty. "Good-bye. I do not say 'Be Brave,' you could never be anything but that—but as you are strong, be merciful," and with a kiss she sent him forth.

"You are with me everywhere, in everything," he wrote from Camp.

" 'Yet yes, believe me when I tell thee so,  
For thou art present wheresoever I go.' "

Your last words ring in my ears day and night. Yesterday I had all the punishments to inflict and O'Reilly, my orderly, was up for leaving Camp without permission. I shrewdly suspected that there 'was a woman in it' but he's a good soldier, devoted to me and amenable to reason for the most part, though as he's an Irishman, it's hard for him to settle down to the monotonous rules and rigid regulations of Camp life.

I had determined to give him a severe punishment and make an example of him, depriving him of liberty for a week. This morning at breakfast he brought me the dainty blue envelope which heralded a letter from you, and he looked quizzically at me with a twinkle in his blue eyes. Does it please you to know that I let him off half

of his punishment, dear? I did it for your sake.

I daresay the rascal will be on the lookout for blue letters after this. I know I am, and that I'm blue enough when I fail to get them!

I am loving you better every day, my Sweetheart—God keep you! R. S."

\* \* \*

For four hours the fight had raged around Santiago.

A hell of shot and shell burst around, above and on the men, yet the line flinched not.

"With blare of bugle, clamor of men,  
Roll of cannon and clash of arms,  
A day of onsets and despair,  
Dashed on every rocky square  
The surges charges foamed themselves away!"

"Send a company around the hill overlooking the enemy's breastworks into the bushes to clear out guerillas," was the order, and Stirling's men went upon their dangerous mission. Over the chaparel and cacti, with reptiles gliding affrighted about them, the heat blinding in its intensity onward the little band crept.

Nearer, nearer they stole, their goal almost in view—then, there was a sound as if of an

earthquake, a crash—and Roger Stirling knew no more.

When he came to himself it was night, the moon shone through the palmetto trees, and the stars of the vivid Tropic twinkled hopefully.

"Where am I?" he thought half-conscious, feeling a swaying movement beneath him, though so benumbed with pain that he scarce knew what had happened. As his fleeting senses returned he heard a voice saying unsteadily:

"Holy Mother! Keep me stidy now! It's not much further sure." Then he felt himself stopped and steadied. "Are you livin' Captain dear?" asked the voice, and then he knew that it was his orderly speaking, and realized that he was tied upon the man's back.

"What are you doing Mike?" he asked feebly.

"Saints an' Angels! He's spoke!" cried O'Reilly joyfully.

"I'm just takin' you to the Red Cross, Sir. Couldn't you call me a Spalpeen an' then I'd know you'd get well," said the rich brogue coaxingly.

Captain Stirling laughed but the sound ended in a groan of pain and Mike went on.

"There now, aisy, aisy! I can't pack you any aisier cause wan uv me arrums is broke. I ax yer pardon Sir, fur loadin yer Honor pick-a-back loike a baby, but it's the only way. We 're mos' in—" but his burden made no answer for to the agony of pain had come the blessed relief of unconsciousness, and he had fainted away.

\*       \*

By a comfortable cot in the Red Cross ship, his broken arm neatly bandaged and endeavouring awkwardly to fan with the other one, sat Michael O'Reilly, beside his Captain, whose undaunted spirit still shone in his handsome black eyes, although his face was worn and marred with lines of pain.

"Mike, you rascal," said the officer, as he lay looking at his brawny nurse. "What made you try to bring me in, when you were wounded yourself?"

"'Twas all the little blue letters, yer Honour," said the owner of the twinkling Irish eyes.

"An orderly sees a lot, you know, an' I couldn't help noticin' thet you wuz different the days the letters come.

I aint forgot the day you let me off of punishment—an' I deserved it too, but I'd bin sayin' 'good-bye' to my girl, when I got run in. You've bin mighty good to a low down feller like me, an' I laid it all to the little blue letters, Sir. So, when I seed you lyin' under that big banana tree, an' yer leg doubled up with a cursed Spanish bullet, all unbeknownst to you—fur the Dagos bust on us loike a whirlwind, an' we went down like lead—why I kinder felt a lump in my throat, an' I thought, 'What 'll become of the little blue letters, an' her as writes 'em, if I leave him layin' here?' So I jess brought you in, Captin."

"God bless you, Mike;" the Captain choked and turned his back, man-like, ashamed that another man should see his emotion, though touched beyond expression at the simple story, and he murmured to himself:

"The quality of mercy  
Is not strained; it blesses him who gives and  
him that takes."





## "TO FORGIVE, DIVINE."

CONFESSION! I? *Padre Santo!* Why should I go to confession, Sister?

"Because you will die before night; the Señor Doctor has said it."

"Die? I shall die? Well, I have lived long, and I find not life so sweet. But if my time has come to die, I will die like a man and a soldier, and not with a lot of priests in women's petticoats dangling about me, and stopping my breath with their prayers," and Manuel de Castro frowned sullenly.

The pale face of the Sister of St. Joseph flushed a little under her stiff white coif, and she smoothed her habit nervously, but she merely said: "Señor, to die is a fearsome thing. The good God is merciful but very just. Is there nothing you would speak of? Nothing you would wish forgiven?"

"Forgiven?" The sick man's face paled until his bronzed cheek seemed leaden in hue. "Yes," he said at last, and his words fell upon the silence like the tinkling of ice

in the goblet near by, "I should like to be forgiven for one act. I've led a wild and roving life, yet one deed stands out before me, and it can never be forgotten nor forgiven. It is impossible."

"With God all things are possible," said the gentle voice of Sister Dolores. "He will forgive."

"You tell me this, and you are a woman," the man muttered. "Perhaps —" he hesitated, then rousing himself suddenly he said, "I will tell it to you, and if you say I may be forgiven, I shall believe it."

The Sister looked down. What tale of horror was to wring her gentle soul! But she was not one to flinch from any duty. "Tell me, if you will," she said, "but may I not send for *Padre Antonio*?"

"No, no. I'll have no priest; my tale is of a woman, and to a woman will I tell it, or not at all."

"I will listen," she said, folding her hands beneath her *babador*.

The carved clock in the corner struck the hour—one, two, three. All outside the narrow room was still, save for the hum of the grasshopper in the cocoa trees. The fragrance of

flowers came through the open window. The sun's warm rays were closely barred out, and the room was cool and neat, with the prim, painstaking neatness of a religious.

The nun beside the narrow hospital cot was the only spot of color, for her blue habit shone clear against the white coverlet of the bed. The man upon it was gaunt and haggard with illness, although he had once been handsome. His hair was heavy and black, falling over his eyes, which, too were black and deep set. The mouth, under the slight mustache, was well cut, though passionate, and his whole face wore an undisciplined look. His hands upon the coverlet were brown and sinewy, and he moved them restlessly as he began:

"I was not always overseer of *el* Señor Romero's cocoa plantation in Trinidad; nor, as now, lying helpless with a fever from a garapata's bite. I was from Saragossa, and my people were of the nobles. Never were there prouder. My mother was all for the Church; an uncle was Bishop of Gerona, another an archbishop, and three aunts were *monjas*. They wished me for the Church too, but I, with my father's turbulent blood in

my veins—I longed for war and adventure. So I was a soldier, and fitting it was too, for the de Castros were always soldier folk since before the days when Antonio de Castro was knighted by the ‘Five Kings.’ Well and bravely did he fight in the famous battle of Las Navas de Tolosa, and twenty turbaned Moors lay dead around him when he was rescued as he defended the standard. We Aragonese are loyal and brave if we are haughty. So I made no trial to buy myself off when the twentieth year came round. Fifteen hundred *pesetas* were well enough to waste for puling lads who longed for cassock and cowl, but not for me.

“I served my three years with the colors, and was five-and-twenty when it happened that I was betrothed to Inez. Why do you start?” asked the sick man, as his nurse gave an exclamation.

“It is time for your medicine,” she said, pouring out a cooling draught; and her hand trembled as she held the glass. The sick man drank greedily, but continued, and his tone grew dreamy, “I do not know just what I felt for Inez. She was very beautiful in her cold way; tall, very tall and slight, of the

blond Andalusian type of her mother's race, with hair like the golden, silken threads of the maize when it tassels in the Serrania de Doroca. Her eyes were blue, her cheeks pale, yet sometimes have I seen a flame like a scarlet pomegranate flash o'er her face, and her eyes seem black.

"Her mother and mine were closest friends, and her dead father and *mi padre* were near of kin.

"So we were betrothed, and Inez Gonzalez was to be the Señora de Castro in a year, not sooner. I must do fortress duty, and was stationed at Jaca, near Paas Canfras, a mountain village, and one to which I would not wish to take a fair young bride.

"I think that Inez loved me not. She was gentle and kindly, and, as a high-born Spanish maiden should do, she fell in with the wishes of her parents. I thought her cold, and wished she would show some fire or wit. She could laugh and be merry enough with Luis, my younger brother. By Santiago! but it angered me to see how he looked at her. He loved her well enough, and perhaps that bound me to her, for a man wishes always what another man wants—is it not so, Sister Dolores?

"How know I?" answered the nun, and Manuel de Castro continued:

"Against my will I grew fond of Inez. Against my will, I say, because I was ever of a wilful nature, and would not pay my duty where it was due. I admired her, but she was too holy for my taste. I like ever a woman with a dash of spirit, and not your praying kind. I crave your pardon, Sister; in a convent they do well, but not among the men.

"At the fights Inez would put up her fan, not to peep through the sticks as does any Spanish *doncellita*, but to hide her craven eyes. Once, when a *matador* was gored, and lay dead and mangled with six horses in the ring, while blood was flowing like the water in the King's fountain in the Alameda, *por Dios*, a glorious sight for a true-born Spaniard!—once, I say, she wept. *Spirito Santo!* the betrothed of a de Castro weep that a *matador* is dead!" and the soldier's scornful laugh rang out, and seemed to waken the mocking echoes in the room.

Sister Dolores shuddered. Outside the window the sun began to lengthen the long, cool shadows which struck the white walls

of the hospital. The soft hum of the grasshoppers became fainter and fainter, and the sick man's voice, too, grew feeble as he went slowly on:

"I make my tale long, Sister; yet must I finish, and fearful things are to come. In the summer after my betrothal to Inez, I was often on leave. Saragossa was near by, and our home was cool, for a fresh breeze came from the Sierra del Madero to the west. We many an evening floated down the Ebro, shooting the piers, a favorite sport since the current is so swift as to make it dangerous. Inez liked it not, but trembled and turned pale; once even I heard her murmur, 'A pearl rosary to the Virgin del Pilar, and she bring us safe to shore.'

" '*Carramba!*' I exclaimed angrily. 'With all thy prayers art not thou ready for death and it comes?'

" 'Perhaps I am,' she answered, with a flash from her blue eyes, 'but art thou?' I was silent, but often have I thought of it.

" 'For awhile I was stationed at the Aljaferia, and many joyous times have I had in the rooms where Ferdinand and Isabella slept, or St. Elizabeth of Portugal was born. 'Tis

many a year since then, and I am not like the gay lieutenant of artillery who was betrothed to Inez Gonzalez.

“My mother talked often of my leaving the army and settling down. ‘Thou art five-and-twenty,’ she said; ‘I can pay the *pesetas* for thy land-tax. Thou must be put to the second reserve to be chosen for the Cortes.’ I only laughed. I had no more taste for the Cortes and musty law-books than I had for a shaven crown and a cowl.

“So matters went on, and one day we were in the Pignatelli gardens, and it was September. The oaks and chestnuts were shady and pleasant. My mother and Inez talked together of some feminine gear, and Luis listened as if he knew it all. He was a tall *caballerete* and handsome, with a degree in the University, and a way with him that made everybody like him, especially the women. I was chafing inwardly that I must needs be at home, a squire of dames, when my regiment bade fair to have lively work up in the Pyrenees, for the brigands and gypsies were at large.

“Suddenly from a table near by I heard a laugh. Such a laugh! *Madre!* it thrills



through me even now in all the sweetness of its merry, girlish cadences. I looked up. A girl sat at a table near by with an old man, and both were drinking *San Vicente*. As I gazed her eyes met mine. San Juan de Losca! but her glance would have turned a stone to life. Little hands drew her mantilla about a face like a *granadilla* bloom, and she turned to go.

“Love comes to a man like a flash of lightning. In that one-half second’s glance she owned me body and soul. I would have died for her. Inez, my mother, all were forgotten. I turned to my friends saying I had seen a brother officer and must go to speak with him; would they pardon me?

“I followed her. Through the narrow, winding streets of the old town, in and out their tortuous ways, beneath the overhanging roofs, past the Lonja, at last she entered an old house in the poorer quarter. An instant later a white hand flung open the swinging, vine-covered casement and I saw again that wild-rose face, her mantilla tossed aside. Then she disappeared.

“That night and many another found me beneath her balcony. I played my mandolin, I sang to the guitar:

‘Por tf ambiciono gloria  
Por tf requezas  
Por tf pulso la lira  
Di los poetas  
Y por tf espero  
Y misen gusano  
Tocar el cielo.’

“The rough soldier became a gentle wooer, yet not too gentle, for methinks some women like a touch of brute in the man they love. It makes them feel a mastery to which they long to bow. Is it not so, Sister Dolores?”

“Why ask me?” said the nun, and there was a deep flush upon her wan cheek. “You are tiring yourself. Rest, it grows late.

“But no, I must tell the tale; yet I must make it shorter, for truly I grow weary,” and he sighed heavily, then continued: “Winter came and passed. I had never spoken to my love, but I knew her name was Célie Le Grange. She was an actress, and the old man, her father, brought her to Saragossa to learn the Spanish dances. She was to go to Paris in the spring. One night as I waited beneath her window, hoping for some sign, a red rose dropped upon me. I could have died for joy.

"I watched the old man, who guarded her well, and saw him leave the house. I caught a gleam of her white arm behind the lattice and swung myself up the piazza. I grasped the window ledge. She was there; she let me kiss her hand and murmur sweetest words to her, my crimson rose!

"Ah! had you ever a heart? Were you happy?" he demanded, almost fiercely, raising himself upon his elbow, and looking at his auditor fixedly with a gaze that compelled a reply.

"I was happy for an instant, once, and then—but no matter," answered the Sister, her white fingers nervously grasping the rosary at her side.

"Ah, well, she said she loved me. I was mad for her. She was such a woman as a man would die for, except he could live for her. There has not been such another, a woman for whom so many would have sinned, not since the days when 'Witiza the Wicked taught all Spain to sin.' I forgot home, honor, all. I was to go with her to Paris, marry her, leave my regiment, give up everything. 'Twas no sacrifice; it was for *her*. I asked for long leave, told my people I wanted

to travel, and left Saragossa. She went with me. We were married. For months I was in a trance of joy. I sold out of my regiment and sent a letter to Inez saying I could not fulfil my contract. The betrothal had never been public, so she was not disgraced. I cared not if she were. I cared only for the marvellous little piece of flesh and blood I called my wife.

“All the passion of a passionate race I lavished upon her. All the tenderness latent within me was hers. I worked for her, I strove to gratify every whim. I had no regrets. She was my life—my soul itself. Often when the little, warm, lovely thing nestled to my arms, and the tiny brown hand smoothed my hair, and the scarlet lips brushed my cheek I held my breath lest I should wake and find that I was dreaming in Paradise. I could not think she was mine.

“She laughed and danced through the days. To see her sing a few *coplas* of the *seguidilla*, or tread the *chamberga* would make one wild. One smile from her sent me in Heaven. *Por Dios!* it *was* heaven. I have no right to claim a second, since I had mine on earth—yes, and my hell too. She was such a child!

so fair, with her crisp black curls and her roguish black eyes! But false—as false as I had been to win her; false to her vows as I had been to my honor.

“We were in Paris and the nest I had built my tropic bird was very bright and beautiful. I came home one night to find her—gone. A note upon the table said she had left me. She had been fond of me, but she was tired. She wanted to act, wanted fame. She had never been my wife; she was married to the old man I thought her father before she ever saw me. He had found her and meant to put her on the stage, and so—‘Good-by.’

“I was like a madman for weeks. I hunted everywhere and never found the slightest trace of her. Months passed. I grew weary of it all. I heard that my mother was dead. Sometimes there stole across my troubled spirit a longing for the calm, sweet, gentle woman I had forsaken, Inez—would she be kind to me?

“My love for Célie had grown to loathing for one so false. I determined to go home. Reaching Saragossa one dark night I went in silence to the castle. Lights streamed from the windows and there was a sound of revelry

in the air. I waited until the carriages rolled away and then crept to the house. All was dark save one room from which a shaft of light streamed out upon the lawn.

"I stole to the window and looked within. My brother Luis was standing in the room and some one came toward him. It was a woman, and as she turned her face toward the light I saw—Inez! She glided to my brother and his arm enfolded her. His hand lay on her shoulder and I heard him say, gently. 'Thou art come to me at last. Dost thou love me? Art thou happy, my wife?'

"She turned her face and kissed the hand which lay so caressingly upon her shoulder. A light such as I had never seen kindled her eyes as she said, 'I love thee with my whole soul, my Luis. I am perfectly happy,' and she rested in his arms like a tired child close to its father's breast.

"A wild rage seized me at the sight of a happiness I might never know. I had always hated Luis. In an instant I was assailed by the awful madness of a temper which our race has held for centuries, ever since Pedro the Cruel killed his sister's son and she cursed him and his children's children. I raised my

pistol and shot my brother, and as he fell dead upon the floor Inez gave one cry. *Dios!* It rings within my ears yet.

"I fled like a hunted beast, not from fear of vengeance, but from the sound of that cry. I shipped from Barcelona for the Barbadoes, thence to Cuba, and from there hither. In Trinidad have I spent these long, long years.

"Now I am to die, you tell me, and you speak of forgiveness. Tell me, *sorella mia*, you are a woman: would Inez de Castro forgive the man who forsook her and killed her husband on her wedding-night?"

Sister Dolores' eyes were on the ground. Her pale lips moved in prayer, her hand grasped tightly the crucifix upon her breast, the symbol of her vow to carry the cross of the Crucified upon the earth.

"Tell me," repeated De Castro, anxiously.

Then she answered simply,

"Yes."

"You are sure?" he asked, incredulously, yet with a dawning hope in his face.

"Yes," Sister Dolores said more firmly; "I am sure, because I forgive you, and I *was* Inez Gonzalez."

"You!" His eyes met hers in a long, long look, and then hers fell.

"God will not be less kind than a woman," said Manuel, falling back upon his pillow. "Send for Father Antonio."

\* \* \*

"A wicked life, but a good death," said Padre Antonio, two hours later.

The last rays of the sunset shone through the open window and lighted up the dead man's face, upon which there was a strangely peaceful smile.

"God bless you, my dear daughter," added the saintly old priest.

Sister Dolores, folding the dead man's hands upon his breast, made the sign of the cross upon his forehead, and silently left the room.

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## THE BLACK-HORSE CLOCK OF THE SEÑOR VALDEZ.

“One, Two, Three, Four, Five, Six, Seven, Eight!”

There was a strange insistency in the clock's tone as it struck the hour. It annoyed the Señor; the metallic sound rasped his nerves, and he gave an impatient sigh, but his thoughts were too engrossing to be long interrupted, and, resting his head upon his hand, he was soon deaf to everything.

He had lived all his life in this quaint old Moorish castle on the Xenil's banks and now he was to leave it.

He loved every arch and lattice, every *azulejo* and inscription.

Within those grim walls Francina, his wife, had died, and left him alone with the baby, who had come from Heaven as she went thither. The boy had since then been his father's only joy, and now the lad was one-and-twenty, and he wanted to marry. Here the Señor sighed again.

"Marrying costs money," he muttered to himself, "and times are very bad in Spain."

Antonio was a clever lad and painted pictures which the *Americanos* bought. Nobody knew much of this, least of all the proud old Don, and Antonio used his money to lessen in many ways the rigors of his father's life.

It was the question of money which troubled the Señor. For himself he cared little. He was old; he loved only to read in musty books of the past glories of Spain. He wanted money for Antonio. He surely should not be the last of his race, one which had been famous since Pelayo's days!

He could not understand it.

The lawyer had patiently explained, that mortgages, with principle, and interest unpaid for years had eaten up all the money of the estate.

Everything was in need of repairs; the castle fairly tumbling about his ears, and—worse than all—here was the Señor Antonio wishing to marry a young woman without a *dot*! What a misfortune! There was the *Americanita*, rolling in gold, with an eye to a title and not ill to look upon; why could not the young Señor have fancied her?

54 *The Black-Horse Clock of Señor Valdez.*

His father could not understand all these things. He felt only that for the first time in his life he had to deny the idol of his heart the thing he seemed to want.

"One, Two, Three, Four, Five, Six, Seven, Eight, Nine!"

"*Quita, quita!*" said the Señor, with as much impatience as his old-world courtliness would ever permit.

The clock ceased striking with the calm air of one who has performed a duty virtuously in the face of opposition, but its "tick-tack" went solemnly on.

It seemed to the Señor Valdez as if the persistent sound was marking the moments left to him in his home.

If Antonio had been wilful it would have been different, he thought. He was such a good boy! He loved Carisia dearly and yet, when he had asked his father's permission to deck her brows with orange blossoms, and the Señor had angrily said "Nay," (angrily because he wished to say "Yes," and he cared not), even then Antonio had yielded.

He had looked sad, very sad, but he said only, "*Si, si, mi Padre,*" and he went quietly away. The Señor had heard no more of little Carisia.

She was not a fitting mate for his young eagle, he knew that, and yet, so dearly did the proud old Don love his son, that he would have swallowed his Castillian pride and permitted the marriage. Without a *peseta* this was impossible. He wished that he could give the maiden her *dot*. That would be to give all and take little, which would please the Señor mightily.

Carisia's father was but a goldsmith and spent his days in copying the old Moorish jewelry for the rich Americans who delighted in his silver filagree and gold-wrought stuffs.

The goldsmith Garçon had his pride also, and he told his daughter that she should have naught to say to the penniless lad whose castle towers were crumbling into bits.

So it chanced that Antonio's guitar was heard no more beneath the little iron balcony where Carisia was wont to sit, lovely as a saint, with one deep red rose in the clouds of her mantilla.

Fate had forced two doting parents into this attitude of cruelty, but lovers have ever defied Fate and there were stolen interviews between these two dutiful children, vows of fidelity and promises of future happiness.

56 *The Black-Horse Clock of Señor Valdez.*

"*Paciencia*, Antonio *mio*," said Carisia sweetly. She was the daintiest of Andalusian beauties with silky black hair and eyes like night.

"All will yet be well. I am praying thy sweet Portuguese Saint Antonio to find a way that I may become pleasing to the Señor, thy Father."

"Not so, my Angel," cried Antonio all aflame. "'Thou must be pleasing to anyone. It is but the money. I shall go away and fight and come back rich to marry thee.'"

"Ah, wilt thou not return to be false to thy Carisia, as did the wicked soldier in the legend of the *Cristo de la Vega*?" Her soft voice was full of tears.

"*Mi Querida*, thou knowest I will *never* be false to thee!" cried the boy, and then there followed those vows at which they say 'Jove laughs.'

The Señor Valdez knew nothing of all this. He only knew that Antonio was often sad, and he felt himself growing older every moment as he thought over the matter.

As the clock tolled forth ten he glared at it fiercely.

It was a strange piece of Moorish work-

*The Black-Horse Clock of Señor Valdez. 57*

manship which had come down through generations of stately Valdez' and always with the injunction,

"Never part with the Black-Horse Clock!"

If some gay Don asked why, the answer was always the same, "I know not, but so my father said to me." That was enough for, to a Spaniard, what his father has said and done is as sacred as the sword of the Cid, or the relics of Santiago at Compostella's shrine.

The clock ticked on year after year in the tower of the Valdez castle.

It was a large clock, elegantly wrought in metal so dark that it was almost black. The gold wire inlaid upon its surface formed strange letterings which were nearly imperceptible with age. Upon the face were weird marks and scrolls, which made it seem almost like a human face, grotesque and distorted with fiendish glee.

Strangest of all, for all the world knows that the Moorish artisan made no likeness of any living thing, upon the top of the clock was a bronze horse, a spirited, dashing figure, with one foot raised, and poised over a small, gold ball. Beneath were engraved in Moorish

58 *The Black-Horse Clock of Señor Valdez.*

characters, the words, "With a woman it went, by a woman it comes!"

As each hour struck, the tiny hoof of the bronze horse descended and smote the golden ball with a pretty ringing sound.

"Whatever else goes, we must keep the Black-Horse Clock, Antonio," the Señor said, and his son, wondering a little, told it to Carisia, down by the almond trees.

Carisia was a well brought up maiden and her *ama* was near by, but the old woman's memory for her own youth was better than her eyesight. She saw not the handsome *caballero* with her little mistress. She saw only the rose-hued shafts of the sun-set across the Holy Ground where slept her Juan and she murmured an *Ave* for his soul.

"I saw that clock once," said Carisia. " 'Twas when thou wert gone to the Sierras with the English officers from Gibraltar. Anita took me to the castle when she went to see thy Manuelita, and she said that at night, figures hover about it, and dance when it strikes. Is't true?" and she drew closer to him timidly.

"In truth I know not, *Chica*, but I do know that nothing shall harm thee."

*The Black-Horse Clock of Señor Valdez.* 59

"Tonito *mio*," she said, after a few moments of the silence which is more than speech to lovers, "thou wilt not be angry if I say something?"

"Angry with thee? Never!" said the lad warmly. "What is't?"

"I—" she hesitated. "I cannot come more to see thee here."

"Thou dost not love me," he cried amazed.

"Ah yes, Antonio, but it is thy father and mine," she said. "It is that I like not to deceive and they think that we—" she paused again and sobbing cried, "*Mi Querido*, thou knowest that thou art my life and that I shall never belong to another!"

Antonio's breath came quicker as he clasped her close.

"Thou art right, my little saint, but I will never give thee up," he said.

The Señor, meantime, sat looking at the Black-Horse Clock, with pitiful earnestness, and it seemed to leer at him with a smile on its evil face.

It ticked so slowly that at last the old man was soothed and fell asleep. Long he slept, unmindful of a dread enemy who was creeping nearer and nearer; an enemy clothed in



60 *The Black Horse Clock of Señor Valdez.*

scarlet, with heavy breath and wicked purpose.

Antonio slept also, but he seemed to hear within his dreams his sweetheart's voice, and he murmured sleepily, in the pretty diminutive of Spanish lovers, "Carisita!"

The voice of love can pierce to even sleeping ears, and at last he roused himself to hear her calling in reality, "Antonio, Antonio! wake!"

He sprang to his feet, hastily throwing on his clothing. Looking from the window, he saw her face pale in the moonlight and he cried, "What is it?"

"Quick! There is a fire! I saw it from my lattice. My father has gone for aid. I came to warn thee. Come! The Señor, thy father—where is he?"

"In the turret—I will go to him," Antonio answered. He sprang to the door but a sheet of flame enveloped the stairway. He rushed to the window, lowering himself from the balcony.

"The stairway seems impassible," he cried. "I must bring a ladder. Fly to safety, Carisia," but she answered only, "save the Señor!" and he left her.

*The Black-Horse Clock of Señor Valdez.* 61

She wrung her hands. Would help never come? Why did not the Señor awake? Was he stifled with the smoke? Could she not save him for Antonio's sake?

She wrapped her mantilla close about her head and face.

She stopped for naught, but, saying a quick prayer to God, she rushed to the turret door and flung it wide. Up, up she ran! The fire had died away, but the smoke was blinding. She forced back her tears, saying over and over under her breath, "Antonio! Antonio," and her tiny feet at last reached the Señor's door. She flung herself against it, opening it and closing it behind her. The room was untouched as yet, and the old man slept. She touched him on the arm, crying, "Wake! Wake!"

He stirred sleepily, opened his eyes and looked at her in astonishment, then,

"Will you be seated, Señorita," he said with courtliness, even in his bewilderment.

"I thank you, there is no time! The castle is on fire! You must go by the window!" with quivering lips she gasped.

The hand which held her mantilla was badly burned, and the pain well nigh unbear-

62 *The Black-Horse Clock of Señor Valdez.*

able, but she shut her lips tight together and bore it unflinchingly.

The Señor grew alert in a moment.

"You have come to save me, and I must save you," he said. Then, pulling down the bed-curtains and knotting them together, he tied one end to the great oak posts.

"Now, Señorita, you must go first," he said, as he threw the loose end out of the window.

"Not so," she panted. "It may not be strong enough. If it holds you it surely will me. You must try it first; I dare not. It may not reach the ground. If you go down in safety, by then a ladder may be here. Oh, Señor, if you love your son, go!"

He knew she did not speak the truth, and that there was no fear in her brave heart. She did but stay for his safety, and yet he could not withstand the pleading of those lovely eyes.

"I go," he said, "but you shall be saved, my child."

As he swung himself over the window-sill, the Black-Horse Clock savagely struck, "One, Two!"

On the next day there was great excitement

*The Black-Horse Clock of Señor Valdez.* 63

in the goldsmith's shop, just beyond the Alhambra walls, near to the fountain of Charles Fifth. Never before had there been so many customers, and never had the old artificer had so many eager listeners to his tales.

He told all with complacence and yet with that self-respecting calm so agreeable in men of his race even to the least peasant, and the Señor Garçon was no tiller of the soil, but a man of good birth and sturdy burgher ancestry.

"Yes, the Señor Don is my guest, he and the Señor Antonio," he said. "It was sad to have the castle burn. No one knows how it took fire. By the grace of God my little Carisia saw the flames, gave the warning and saved the Señor Valdez. She was brave, yes, and she was burned so badly that she could scarce stand for the betrothal. You did not know that there was a betrothal? The Señor Don is very ill and he sent for me this morning to ask my consent that the Señor Antonio should marry Carisia.

"Of course" — here the goldsmith looked wise — "it is not a great match for my girl, since the young Señor has not money and

64 *The Black-Horse Clock of Señor Valdez.*

now, even his castle is burned. But then, what would you? Young folks must have their will!" and the good man smiled benignly.

The Señor Valdez did not die, but Carisia nursed him back to health and strength with such loving care that soon he turned to her for everything.

Antonio, who had loved her before, grew to worship her, so sweet was she in her father's house.

One day, they all sat in the little *patio* where the orange trees, heavy with golden fruit, gleamed in the sunlight.

Antonio was silent, content to watch the sweet face of his betrothed; a face no longer childish, but one to which suffering, and unselfish care for others had brought a gentler womanliness.

At last the Señor spoke.

"Antonio, I am better now; we must arrange something. There is money due to many. Nothing remains, but the land upon which my castle stood. That too must go to pay the debts. All else is gone; all, even the Black-Horse Clock," he said mournfully.

*The Black-Horse Clock of Señor Valdez.* 65

"All shall be arranged, *mi padre*," said Antonio soothingly, as he saw his father's lip tremble.

Then Carisia spoke, drawing from her bosom a small object.

"Señor, I have but waited till you were stronger to tell you a strange thing.

The night of the fire, after you had gone from the window, something, I knew not what, drew my eyes to the chimney where stood the Black-Horse Clock. As it struck the hour of two it made so fierce a sound that I sprang toward it, and only just in time. Señor, it is too strange to be believed, but the foot of the horse struck the little golden ball; it opened wide, and I could see that there was something within.

As quickly as might be, I snatched the little roll and drew it forth, just as the ball closed again. Then I heard shouts from below, the smoke made me ill, but Antonio came through the window, and bore me down the ladder. I thought that which was hidden in so strange a place must be of value, and here it is, dear Señor," and she handed him a small, folded paper.

The Señor Valdez took it with trembling

66 *The Black-Horse Clock of Señor Valdez.*

fingers. It was a piece of parchment, yellow with age, and when unfolded it proved to be covered with Moorish characters.

"Señor Garçon, you can read these lines, perhaps," said Don Fernando. Then, with the dignity which so much marked him, he added.

"This may concern the honour of my house, Señor. I pray you to hold it in confidence."

"As though I were a priest in the confessional," said the Señor Garçon, as he took the paper. Then an expression of pleased surprise stole over his features, and he said:

You are impatient; I will read;

"I, Abdul Hafiz, Moorish knight, and cousin to the great king of Algiciras and of Ronda, do write this with my own hand.

Great were the treasures of my house, greatest of all my fair daughter, Caliza, child of my favorite, Haltima. Upon this daughter lies my curse forever and forever; so be it!

In the year 1345 came false Christian knights with an embassy of peace from the king of Castile and Leon. Many knights

*The Black-Horse Clock of Señor Valdez. 67*

there were, but of these Caliza saw one only and he too saw but her.

He lingered long in Granada the Fair, and for him she forgot her home, her father and the Faith of the Prophet. For him she stole from my castle at the hour of two on a night so dark that Heaven seemed to frown on one so false. Hereafter to me is she dead. Son I have none. Christian dog my jewels ne'er shall have. These have I placed in a casket, beneath the lowest step of my turret stair.

Then have I made the Black-Horse Clock, since on a horse as black as night Caliza fled from me. Within the golden ball I hide this paper. Only at the morning stroke of two can the ball be opened; only by a woman pure and dutiful and true shall the parchment be found, else my solemn curse shall rest upon that one who touches jewels or casket.

With a woman it went; by a woman it comes! So say I, Abdul Hafiz, the Moor!"

There was silence in the little *patio* as the voice of the old man ceased. Only the cool splash of the fountain and the flutter of birds in the orange trees disturbed the intense stillness.



68 *The Black-Horse Clock of Señor Valdez.*

"My daughter," said the Señor Valdez at last, "Thou hast brought good fortune to my house," and he kissed her hand with all his old-world respect and affection.

But Antonio—proud young lover—held her fast and kissed her crimson lips as he whispered, passionately and yet tendely too,

"*Santa Maria!* Thou alone art good fortune enough for any man, my Angel!"

The Moorish treasures were found, treasures so quaint, rich and rare that queens vied with each other to possess them.

The Valdez castle was rebuilt and stood more proudly than ever upon its crags, and many were the votive offerings for the poor which found their way to the chapel of San Antonio in the beautiful Vega below.

The Señora Valdez wears sapphires and diamonds, and rubies as red as her own bright cheeks, but of all her treasures she prizes most a wide, gold band which was her marriage ring. Upon it her father had engraved the figure of a horse and the words, in curious Moorish characters, "With a woman it went, by a woman it comes!"



## THE GOLDSMITH'S MADONNA.

GIL GARÇON was a lonely old man. It was twenty years since his wife died and left him with little Carisia, and now she was gone too: not to heaven like her mother—the goldsmith was sure that his wife was in heaven. “She never committed a mortal sin in her life,” he said to Padre Josef. Carisia had not come to her paradise by way of death. Her route had been merely a *via amoris* for her tiny feet, and her celestial regions were no farther away than the castle upon the hill above the Vega. Old Garçon the goldsmith had been proud to have his little daughter marry the Señor Antonio, and go to live in the Valdez Castle; and yet, as was quite natural, her absence left him very lonely.

“*Nuestra Señora*, the light of my eyes, the joy of my heart, has gone from me. Send her happiness, and comfort me!” he prayed often.

There seemed so little for the old man to do. His foreman, Pedro Gimenez, managed the shop. Since the war had set everybody

by the ears there were few Americans in Granada, and that was bad for the goldsmith's custom. The foreigners had bought much at the little shop on the hill, and they always spent their *pesetas* freely. The shopkeeper did not really suffer. He had too good a store of silver laid away to object to a temporary depression of business. Besides, Carisia, at the castle, was always imploring him to leave the shop altogether and came to live with her.

"Nay, nay, my angel!" he would say. "A man should stay where he is born. What should I do in thy grand castle? With thee it is different. A woman always takes her place from her husband and follows him everywhere. But for me it is best that I remain Garçon the goldsmith. So fly back to thy nest, little bird!" And he smiled and send her away.

But often the Señor Garçon wandered from the house into the street—the steep street which led to the town, winding down almost like the steps of a turret. He went to the Alameda, greeting his acquaintances; yet in his heart lonelier than ever, because those he saw had with them friend or sweetheart, child or wife, while he had no one.

Often, too, he left the crowd and sauntered into a little church to rest. It was not the great cathedral, full of shrines and tombs, statues and painted windows. He did not feel so much at home there among all the grand people; though good Father Josef had chidden him for this, telling him all churches were the same, since *El Cristo* was on every altar. *His* church—as Garçon called it—was very old and quaint. San Juan de los Reyes had been a church since the days of Isabella la Catolico, but even before that the Moors had worshiped there. Within its quiet aisles old Gil Garçon sat for hours at the time, praying and thinking.

There was one picture in the old church before which he lingered often. It was a copy of a famous Madonna, poorly painted perhaps, and of little interest to the mere idle passer-by. To the old man it was wonderful. It seemed as if Elisa, his wife, sometimes gazed at him from the canvas. Those mild brown eyes were surely hers; that tiny baby in her loving arms might have been his Carisia.

“Name of a saint!” he muttered to himself once when he became conscious of his

thoughts. "*Madre de Dios*, forgive me! In looking at thee and thy holy Son, I have thought only of myself and mine." He grew to love the picture more than anything else in all the world, excepting Carisia.

The monk who showed the old church to such chance visitors as happened in so unfrequented a quarter told Gil Garçon that the picture was by the great Murillo, and he always spoke of it as "Maestro Murillo's Madonna."

The goldsmith listened in patience, but in his heart he said:

"Nay, it is mine—my own Madonna! My loved Madonna!"

He seemed to feel the picture with him all the time; and his eyes took a far-away look—a seeing expression as of one who held converse with the invisible. At last people said strange things about him, and some went so far as to call him "the mad goldsmith."

One day he had tarried long before his Madonna, and she had seemed more fair than ever before. Less like his Elisa, it is true; but her eyes seemed to speak of holy things, and to urge him on to gentle deeds for the sake of the Christ-Child on her breast.

Thinking much, he slowly wandered homeward; and so deep was he in his reflections that he heard not the voices of many people until he suddenly found himself in a great crowd.

"They are but gipsies: send them away!" cried one voice.

"Have we not enough of such in the Albaicin? Send them away at once!" exclaimed others; while many uttered threatening words.

A little party was slowly descending the steep path. A man, leaning upon a cane, walked as if weary and worn. Beside him was—Gil Garçon staggered back as if he had been shot.

"It is herself, the *Niño* in her arms! *Madonna mia!*" he cried.

There were the midnight tresses, the deep, fathomless eyes, the scarlet lips; all—mien, expression—was the same as in his Madonna. Was he dreaming? No: the sky, the earth, all was real.

What were those people saying? "Cast them out! Away with the gipsies!" There was no room for them in the inn at Bethlehem: was there to be no room in his own

beautiful Granada? The old man's heart grew hot and angry at the thought. It must not be. He pushed his way through the crowd of hostile peasants which surrounded the gipsies. Many had been the depredations committed by some of the wandering tribes of late, and the people complained bitterly of them. As the goldsmith neared the group, a hand was raised. There was a cry, a stone was thrown at the gipsy man. Ere it struck him Gil Garçon had sprung between. Receiving the blow upon his head, he fell to the ground. "*Dios!* It is the mad goldsmith!" some one cried.

"Shame! shame! it is the Señora Valdez' father,—she that is so kind to the poor," said another.

Meantime the gipsy had raised the poor old man, who smiled feebly.

"To my house!" he said, urgently. "You must come with me. There was no room for them at the inn. *Nuestra Señora*, promise me faithfully that you will come with me?"

With his hand tightly clenched upon the blue mantle of the gipsy mother, he fainted away. Tender arms bore him homeward; and since his hand would not release the

corner of the mantle, the gipsy went with him. Her face was the first thing which the goldsmith's eyes rested upon when he returned from that far-away flight which his spirit had taken.

"You will stay with me?" he asked earnestly. "Promise me that you will remain."

And a soft voice answered: "Yes."

He was very ill, poor "mad Gil." Carisia came often and wished to nurse him; but she found him raving wildly of his Madonna, and that there was no room for her and the Blessed *Niño*—not even in the inn. No one could quiet him but the strange gipsy girl; and when she sat beside him he would open his eyes and gaze fixedly at her, murmuring over and over: "*Madonna mia, Madonna mia!*" And then he would drop into a sweet and tranquil sleep. Carisia implored the stranger to remain, and she did so—watching beside the old man day and night, and nursing him tenderly.

In anxious watching passed the days until it was the eve of *Navidad*, and all Granada was full of rejoicing. Gil Garçon lay still and quiet. Beside him sat the stranger. It was the hour of midnight, and there came



from the old tower a chimé of bells, joyful and loud. The old man opened his eyes.

"What bells are those? he asked.

"Señor, it is the eve of *Navidad*," came the low, sweet reply.

"Navidad! At the first Navidad there was no room for them. Ah! *Madonna mia*, Blessed *Niño*, there is room in my poor heart!" he murmured, and slept until the morning.

When it broke in golden radiance. it found him conscious.

"Tell me who you are?" he asked, as the face of the gipsy bent over him.

"Señor, I am Zalira, a gipsy. A noble came to our camp. He saw me, loved me; we were married. This is my ring: the *niño* is his child. His people quarreled with him because of me, and cast him off. He worked for me and the little one, but at last he fell ill. At the Feast of All Saints he died, señor. We are very poor. My father has many children to provide for, and he is old. He left his tribe to bring me hither. For the sake of the child, and sorely against my will, I journeyed to seek my husband's people, to ask for aid. You sought to rescue us in the

street, and fell. You asked us to come to your home. I was so glad to care for you, dear señor! We had nowhere to lay our heads—" she stopped in tears, and again and again she kissed the old man's hand as it lay upon the coverlet.

"Nowhere to lay her head—no room for them" he murmured. "Child, I am a lonely old man. Stay with me, you and the *niño*, and be my children. It may be that your father will give you to me as a gift at Christmas. He has others to love him, and neither he nor you shall ever know want again. Will you remain with me, *chica*? Perhaps Our Lord will dwell within my heart if it open wide its doors for His children."

Gil Garçon no longer dreams in sadness and solitude before the picture in the old Church of San Juan de los Reyes. He goes thither, it is true, but with a smiling face, leading by the hand a tiny boy. He lifts the lad up in his arms before the Madonna, and the *niño* throws a kiss to the "pretty lady." The goldsmith loves the picture still, and perhaps more than ever, because through it he gained that gentle presence in his heart and life—a sweet woman who is as a daughter

in her loving care for the old man who had befriended her. Sometimes, with no thought of irreverence in his heart, he calls her his Madonna.



## THE SEÑORITA AMERICANA.

**I**T was just there it happened, Señor. I, Jose Goya, saw it all with these, my two eyes. *Por Dios!* it was a sight. Tell you of it, Señor Americano?

It was the month of March and near the feast of Santo Josef. The northwest wind was sweeping down from the Sierra, and a flurry of snow was on the ground. All the world was hurried, for in our valley there is much to do at this season of the year, and, too, it was the time for the wedding of Engracia—daughter of my sister Carlota, whose husband has the inn at Escorcía.

I, Señor, was serving my term then, and was just home from San Domingo, so I had a leave of absence for a month. By San Malo! it was good to be at home again after four years fighting and broiling! I was at Escorcía with Carlota and her man—Miguel—a good fellow and one who knew good wine and spared not a flask of Xeres or even two if the sun was warm. Is there anything better than

a flask of Xeres, when the sun beats hot upon the fields, and one lights a *cigarito* and lies beneath a cypress tree to dream?

I was to stay with Miguel for a month, and then go back to the barracks to live by law and perhaps to go again to some wretched island, to die with spotted fever or a garapata bite. But—what matter? 'Tis all life, Señor, and a man must not fret and whine like women. When 'tis done—why, *Dios!* a soldier's death is quick—and there's the *Capellan* to close his eyes and say an *Ave* for his soul.

The land about Escorcia was a plain, with fields of grain and flowers, but to the north there came a ragged mountain with many a precipice and torrent, and back of this the Sierra Morena reared its craggy head and seemed to shut off Heaven itself.

Half way up the Monte Abanto was a ruined auberge or hamlet, where shepherds had once lived, and there the *Americanos* staid. He was a painter, and of all the men who do strange things these artists are the strangest.

He was a merry chap, with a smile here and another there, a *peseta* for the children,

a gay word to the women, but a fine fellow, too, and with no eyes for women save to paint. San Juan! to paint a woman! I could choke with laughing to see the Señor *Americano* talk to Benarez' Benita. Smile and talk and tell her how rich was the color of her lip, like a ripe *cereza* and then to paint her on a little board!

It was the same way with the *Americana*. She, too, would paint, and the two of them would tramp about in heavy shoes and short clothes all day long, over the mountains—where the paths were well nigh impassable, just to daub some rock or patch of sky down on a paper. They were like—very like the places I must say, but why did they not stay at home and paint? There must be rocks and sky in America.

Yes, painters are queer folk, but everybody liked these *foresteri*, and all felt grieved to hear the Señor was ill. Just at the wedding time it came, the *fiebre*, and many were too ill to come, though the wedding feast lasted a day. Engracia was a fair maid and Henrique Valdez, whom she married, was a fine boy, and one to help Miguel well at the *posaderia*. At the wedding it was there came the news that the Señor painter was ill.

"'Thou should'st go to help the Americano, Carlota," said I to my sister,

"Santa Barbara! Juan, think'st thou I have a daughter married every day? *Mañana—Mañana!*" cried she, and then I forgot it all, for the Xeres flowed like water in the fountains of the Generaliffe long ago before it got to be a show place with water turned on and off at the *lire* a sight! *Cielo!* but times are changed in Spain!

Well, Señor, I make my tale too long and tell you nothing. I slept long and heavily, for the Xeres got into my head, and I lay upon the grass like lead. But others lay longer still, for when I raised my stupid head and looked about, though it was early dawn, not one man in all the village was awake. I stumbled to the brook and dashed the water in my face, and as I raised my eyes toward the mountain, I saw—crawling down the rough road—a something, I could not tell what. I looked again. Could it be a cart? It came nearer and nearer, and I ran to meet it wonderingly, so strange was the sight.

Men are brave beasts, Señor, and we Castilians think ourselves quite the bravest in all Spain, but by the sword of Santo Igna-

cio, a woman is the bravest thing on earth. The women have two kinds of courage. They can bear and suffer and endure, day in, day out, things that a man would stagger under in a day. And then again they will do some great, brave deed, all in a minute, and scarcely seem to think it aught because 'tis for one they love. What was it I saw come down the mountain, Señor? A cart, a rough two-wheeled cart the miller used to bring stone down from the cliff, when he had built the new stone mill. Harnessed to the cart with ropes and bits of twine—a cow—lean, hungry-looking and weary, and beside it—with her hands upon the rope—her feet cut and bleeding, her face white and drawn, a look of abject misery in her beautiful gray eyes—walked the *Americana*.

She coaxed, she pulled, the cow along, urging it with voice and whip. I sprang forward and we spoke quickly.

“What make you?”

“Señor!” She clasped her beautiful, slender hands. “Ah, Señor, you will help me. He is ill, dying with the fever. I could find no one—my maid was gone to the wedding. I dared not leave him alone to die without me.



I must have a doctor. I found the cart, and harnessed the cow. He, the señor, lies on a mattress within the cart. Where can I find the doctor? Ah, help me to get to him!" She looked at me imploringly. I stepped to the side of the cart and peered within. There he lay, the painter, his face drawn and livid. I well knew the fever, and that his span of life was short unless aid came. "I will help you," I said briefly. "Come with me, but quietly, lest we wake the men, and they will not let you have the horse!" Softly we stole to the stables. There was one horse, swift and sure-footed, and a light cart. I harnessed quickly, lifted the Señor's unconscious form from the old cart, placed him on his mattress in the new one, covered him warmly, then turned to her. "I tell you all," I said. "He has but four short hours to live unless he get the cooling drink the Señor doctor gives. The road is hard, and long to Angecera, where the doctor lives. You may reach him in time, but pause for nothing. I would go with you, but I make too great a weight. Will you go? It is the only chance?" She hesitated not a moment. "I go," she cried, springing to the front of the cart and grasping the reins.

"God guard you," was all I said. She flashed upon me a look of passionate gratitude. "I cannot thank you, Señor," she murmured, then she spoke quickly to the horse, he sprang forward, and in an instant they were out of sight.

I watched the disappearing shape and turned to go within the inn, and loosed the poor old cow and turned her out to graze, when suddenly it came to me I could not let that fair young stranger go alone and all unaided in her fearful fight with death. I had no horse and could not follow her, but I remembered a cross path over the mountains, a narrow trail winding over crags and cliffs to the *vega* below, where Angecera lies. I would cut across and meet her half way. Perhaps she would need help. I hastily wrapped food and a wine flask in a *talega*, slung it on my back, and was off.

It was a long, steep climb. The morning air was cold and keen and cut my face like a knife. Have you ever felt it, Señor, that sharp wind from the north, which makes our Sierra Morena so like the pole? Then when the Arctic breeze meets the hot wind from the desert down below, one feels both at

once. Extremes are always bad, Señor. It is only the middle place between joy and pain which gives content. I know, for I have had my heaven and hell right here on earth.

Well, I clambered on, and after two long hours I reached *el Pico*, from where I saw the valley. A little more and I would have reached the broad path, and just then the sun came out and made the rough-hewn mountains seem like the king's palace, so brightly did it shine. I hurried to the road, and waited. The sun rose higher and higher and it was hot; so hot the black flecks seemed to dance before my tired eyes, and the dust rose in little clouds along the road. The yellow *linaria* beside the way seemed like bits of golden sunlight, and the ground lay powdered with the blossoms. Just before me the road turned sharply up a hill, round a huge fir tree and went as sharply down upon the other side. Behind me lay a shallow ford. The mountains rose dark and frowning to one side the narrow road and on the other the precipice went down, down thousands of feet. A nasty place to drive, even for a man strong of heart; for a delicate woman, well, you shall hear.

I heard a sound at last—wheels grating on the rocky road. On she came, faster and faster. At last I saw her. She was leaning forward in the cart, speaking to the horse. Her hat was at the back of her neck, her long, dark hair floated about her face, her cheeks were crimson, her lips tightly compressed. Señor, it was the most beautiful thing I ever saw, the most wonderful! She passed the ford, then stopped her horse an instant to rest, the water dripping from its flanks.

“I can never drive round that turn; never,” I heard her murmur to herself. “God help me.” It was a prayer, Señor; a real prayer, and if *el Dios* ever hears he listens to such women as she. I started to help her, for I could see by the way her little hands twitched the reins that she was nearly spent. But my sudden movement—fool that I was—startled the horse, and he jumped to one side. *Cielo!* I thought the cart had tumbled over the cliff, but she swung her weight over to the right side and whipped the horse sharply. He sprang forward up the hill, round the turn, his feet almost crumbling the gravel at the edge of the path. I saw her face go white as

death and her eyes close as she reached the spot, but her grasp of reins and whip never wavered, and in an instant she was safe on the other side. Then the worst was over, Señor. The rest was a plain roadway, and she drove rapidly down to Angecera, I following by cross cuts, so that I reached there as soon as she.

She came down the street, the horse going well, though tired and lame. With a jerk she pulled up before the Señor doctor's house.

In a moment he was by her side. "Quick, the fever; he has it," she cried, pointing to the quite unconscious form in the cart. The doctor bent over it, drew a flask from his pocket and forced a few drops of a colorless liquid between the white lips.

"Be tranquil, poor *Chica*," he said, gently, to the anxious girl. "I think it is not too late, and he will live."

She looked at him, dazed, for a moment, and then without a word fell at his feet. He motioned to me, and I raised her in my arms and carried her to the house, as he bore in the Señor. *Diablo!* I have known women, but, since Lindaraya the fair, I swear there

was never one like her, the *Americana*. So brave, so strong, and oh! so fair a man must shut his eyes and dare not look at her. I never forget that instant that I held her in my arms. Señor, she was a woman one would die for with a smile upon one's face.

Well, she had the fever and she well nigh died, she was so small and slight; and he, too, lay for weeks between this world and that other *Padre* Paulo tells us of. The day came when both were well, and they sent for me to say "Good-bye." They went back to America, and I was loath to have them go, but they had had enough of Spain and its mountains and its fever.

I never can forget her, *la Chica*, and, somehow, Señor, the memory of her beauty and her grace and her splendid courage spoils all other women for me.

No, Señor, I never saw her again. His wife? *Por Dios*, no; she was his sister, the little Señorita *Americana*. Are all the sisters like that in your land, Señor? It's a strange world. *Adios, Señor; adios.*



## OUR LADY'S SOLDIER.

**I**T was the Feast of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. Upon the tiny altar at St. Anthony's the candles gleamed, and the priest seemed to say the Mass more slowly than usual, as if lingering lovingly over the Blessed Sacrifice. A few old women prayed devoutly, and several fresh-faced school-children knelt in the church; but it must be confessed that beside the old sexton, there was not a man to prostrate himself at the inspiring *Sanctus! sanctus! sanctus!*

Mary Turner often wondered, with a gentle pity, if Our Lord did not tire of being left alone, or almost alone, from Sunday to Sunday. The men of Allentown were too busy for the daily Mass; though it must be said that Sunday always found them in their places. In her sweet, old-fashioned humility, Mary thought that she could not make up for the absence of all the "men folks," as the people of her Southern county called them; but she prayed the harder, and adored the more frequently the dear Christ, hidden beneath the sacramental veils.

On this particular feast she was quite absorbed in prayer when an unwonted sound met her ear. It was the ring of a manly tread upon the bare aisle behind her—a firm tread with a martial sound,—and the owner took the seat directly in front of her. It was a man, a young one, dark-haired, lithe, active, and clad in the uniform of an army officer. That much she saw at a glance, and then she buried her face in her hands and tried to collect her thoughts. It was difficult under the circumstances; for never before had an army officer been seen in Allentown,—not since the days when old Captain Allen had retired from the army and come to live on what was left of the plantation which his grandfather had built long “’fo de wa’.”

Everybody knew all about this young lieutenant, Martin Benedict. He had been sent to enlist recruits for the army of invasion, and all the town had actually gone war-crazy. Mary was as interested as any one.

“I did’nt want the war,” she had said. “It is an awful thing to think of all the poor soldiers—not only ours, you know, but those on the other side. They are *made* to fight; and they have mothers and sisters, too. I



didn't want it; but now we're in it, we *must* win."

Of course she had noticed the handsome lieutenant, with his proud, erect carriage, and she had met him at a friend's house; but she had not dreamed that he was a Catholic. It seemed to bring the whole army nearer to her, and she felt a rush of enthusiasm at the thought that so many of her fellow-Catholics were to help defend her country. "God keep them!" she prayed; and prayed, too, for the stranger until the bell called her to the altar to receive her living, loving, ever-waiting Lord. Engrossed in devotion, she scarcely noticed that the officer knelt beside her and that together they received the Bread of Life.

Then the Mass ended, and she passed out into the soft Southern sunshine, to find him at her side as she paused a moment within the porch, where nodding Baltimore belles wafted their subtle perfume all around. As their glances met, both felt that they were comrades in the greatest of all battles, that of the spiritual life; and he said eagerly, yet with much respect in tone and glance:

"Pardon me, Miss Mary! I leave for Cuba

to-day. Will you sometimes say a prayer for me?"

With a quick, bright blush, she drew from her prayer-book a pair of scapulars, just received from the gentle old priest, and said simply:

"Will you wear these for Our Lady of the Sacred Heart? I shall always pray for you."

"Thank you! You make me Our Lady's soldier," he replied. "I shall wear them for her and—" he paused a moment, and there was a long look from his deep blue eyes into her clear brown ones, mirrored wells of truth and purity—"and for *you*. Good-bye!" And he was gone.

\* \* \*

It was hot, hot, hot! The expedition had landed safe. His orders had been explicit enough. He was to take fifty Cubans, arms and ammunition; land at Cieba de la Terra, make his way to join the insurgents supposed to be encamped near by; and return in the ship which would hover within sight of land to bring him off—if he got through. He was to avoid a combat with the Spaniards until the juncture with the insurgent chief was made. The object was to get the arms and ammunition to them as speedily as possible.

It had been horrible work. The landing was made in safety at midnight; but their guide—a native Cuban, so the lieutenant had been told, and one familiar with all the country, — had failed to find the camp, whether through inability or treachery the officer could not make up his mind.

All night they wandered, weary, a prey to the stings of countless insects, through forests where the underbrush was thick and the ground slimy with reptiles; past the ruins of houses, smoking still; in many cases the dead bodies of the unhappy inmates lying unburied upon the ground, in the light of the full Cuban moon. At last, it seemed by accident, they had stumbled upon the insurgent camp. How glad he was that it was all over! He was a soldier, simple, fearless; there to do his duty, and not merely “seeking the bubble reputation at the cannon’s mouth.”

It was impossible to return to the *Wanda*, waiting in the bay to take him back to Key West, unless he had some sleep first; so he flung himself down on the long, dry grass, under the huge bamboo trees, and looked up into the soft Cuban night. The same stars shone over a Southern village far away. He

wondered if she were praying for him, that brown-eyed girl, whose sweet, pure face he could not forget. In those brief moments within St. Anthony's quaint old church there had come to his soul the knowledge of what a true companionship with such a woman might mean. Souls attuned to the spiritual might together make a heaven of this "poor, squeezed orange of the world." He felt that she remembered, that she would keep her promise to pray for him always, and that her prayers hedged him about with Our Lady's care; so, with a murmured "Hail Mary," he fell asleep.

What was the awful nightmare which awakened him? Shots smote the night air; curses and shrieks resounded about him; the camp seemed peopled with demons. He tried to spring to his feet, but a heavy body pressed him down; there was a sharp sting of pain, a sound as of a thousand cannon in his head, and then he knew no more.

When he came to himself it was early morning. He lay bound upon the rough ground, and about him were strewn the dead bodies of insurgents, wounded in many places. Beside him sat a soldier with a knife in

his hand; and, as Benedict moved slightly, the man bent over him. Was he to be stabbed, or saved perhaps for some more frightful fate? What was that stinging pain in his breast? How bloody he was!

With a quick gesture for silence, the soldier cut his bonds and beckoned to the lieutenant to follow him.

"Silence, Señor! Follow me," he whispered. It was the Cuban guide who had led them into this ambush, entrapping them to their death.

In silence the lieutenant followed the man, who led the way into the depths of the thicket. At last they came out to an open space, where the road to Cieba de la Terra gleamed white in the garish light of early morning. Here the guide stopped suddenly and placed his dagger in Benedict's hand.

"Go, Señor! Your ship lies there," he said.

"Why have you saved me? To whom do I owe my life?" asked the young lieutenant, as he feebly placed a detaining hand upon the shoulder of his rescuer. "You—a Cuban—why have you turned a traitor?"

The young man smiled proudly, and his

even white teeth gleamed beneath his dark moustache.

“Nay, Señor Americano, I am no Cuban!” he exclaimed. “I am Antonio Gil, of Valencia; and a Valencianet says: ‘*Ni olvido, ni perdono.*’ I am for Spain, because what my father did is good enough for me. I was brought to Cuba to kill Cubans and—*caramba!*—I kill them. You I save because you are not Cuban, but more because we—you and I—love the same gentle Lady. When I tried to staunch the wound in your breast, Señor, that you might live until the morning and be shot with the other enemies of Spain—traitors!—I felt the picture about your throat. ‘*Dios!* The picture of his sweetheart, who prays for him perhaps, as some one prays for me in Valencia,’ I said. Then, Señor, I saw the *escapulario* with Our Lady’s picture, and I could not kill Our Lady’s soldier. They told us the Yankees were all heretics, like the dogs of Moors against whom our fathers fought, and that they wished to make Cuba *Protestante*. But you—ah, Señor! why were you not Spanish? It would be best for all to be so; but—I could not see you killed. From here you know the way. *Adios*, Señor!

Our Lady keep you in safety for that one who prays!"

Before the lieutenant could speak the Spaniard was gone from his side, and he was left alone to hasten to the water's edge, murmuring for his rescuer the prayer said for himself: "Our Lady keep you in safety for that one who prays!"



## FOR CUBA?

WHY do I want to go to Cuba, Captain?

It's a long story.

You want me to tell it to you? I will try though my tale is scarcely worth the words so far as my part of it goes.

I was a boy of eighteen, an orphan with no one to care what I did, so it was easy for me to join Crittenden's expedition. You know all about it; the Mexican war was over, and there were plenty of discontented soldiers, brave fellows too, ready for anything rather than settling down to inactivity. There were some of us Mississippians who wanted to annex Cuba, and we were all ready to help her fight for freedom.

"For Cuba" became a by-word, and Crittenden had no trouble in finding men enough for his invasion.

We started in August of Fifty-one, Crittenden leading us with Lopez, Gotay and General Pragay the Hungarian. There were three hundred of us boys, some Americans and some Cubans.



It was easy enough to slip away from New Orleans to Fort Jackson, where a ship awaited us. The "Pampero" was a sturdy little vessel loaded with arms and amunition, and we got away in safety. Once on the Gulf we thought ourselves safe, but the Spanish war-ship Pizarro espied us, and then we ran for it! Never was there such a chase and we thought ourselves lost, until a blessed fog came up, and we slipped past the great ship, and ploughed through the blue waters of the Gulf, making straight for Cuba.

Next day we landed at Bahia Honda, sixty miles west of Havana. Here Lopez left us while he sought the insurgents in the interior. We were to bring up the rear with stores and provisions as soon as he had effected a juncture with the natives.

It was hot and rainy. Fever attacked some of the men, and all feared it. We heard nothing from Lopez. Mutiny threatened in our own camp. At last Crittenden, whose brave spirit was sorely chafing at the delay and longing for action, determined to send a messenger to Lopez, and I volunteered for the post. I could speak Spanish, for my mother was Cuban, though we had always lived in the

States, so I would be in far less danger than an American. I shall never forget how the Colonel looked as I bade him good-bye. I think he was the bravest man I ever knew. He seemed never to know the meaning of personal fear, yet he was as careful of his men as if they were his children.

He was nursing a fever patient, when I reported for orders, and he rose from his knees, straight and tall, the very picture of a gallant soldier.

"You are ready?" he said. "Here is a despatch in cypher," handing me a tiny piece of paper. "Lopez must have it, if possible. Tell him of our position here, and that we *must* come to him at once, or there will be mutiny. Get back to me if you can, my boy," and he held out his hand to me as if I were an equal.

I glanced back at him as I entered the wood and saw him looking after me and that was the last glimpse I ever had of the gallant gentleman. In a month he was dead, shot by the Spaniards. They placed him against the wall at Atares and told him to kneel with his back to them, but he said proudly, "An American always faces the foe, and kneels

only to his God," and they shot him through the heart, the brave heart which beat for liberty.

For four days I wandered through the brush, afraid to ask the way, save once or twice from some half-starved natives.

At length I learned that I was on the right track. Not far from Las Pasas, Lopez' band had met the Spaniards, twelve-hundred in number, and had beaten them in a two hours battle. I reached Las Pasas foot-sore and weary only to find that Lopez had withdrawn his forces, reinforced, however, by forty of Crittenden's men who had managed to reach him.

The country was full of Spaniards. For two nights I lay hidden in the woods in a pouring rain, living on some roots and leaves, and on the third day I came up with the forces at El Fria. I reached there just after the battle was fought, and I hurried to reach Lopez who had repulsed the Spaniards and was making his way to Candelaria.

The horror of that battle field is with me yet, but you, Captain, you know the awfulness of a stricken field! There were heaps of the dead, the moans of the dying, the screams

of wounded horses—ah, the angels above must have hidden their faces at the deeds of men!

I turned away from the sickening scene when, just as I reached the edge of the dense thicket, the groan of a man in mortal agony smote my ear and I paused a moment.

“*Por el amor de Dios!*” moaned a feeble voice, “A priest, Señor, a priest!”

At my feet lay a wounded man, one arm gone, the blood coming in great clots from his breast, torn open by a ball. He fixed two piteous dark eyes upon me gasping again, more faintly, “A priest—as you hope for a good death!”

The words went to my heart. I was none too good a Catholic, Captain, and a scene such as that made a man think. Death seemed perilously near and I could not withstand that plea.

“My poor fellow,” I said, “where can I find a priest? I will bring one if I can.”

A quick joy sprang into his face.

“*El padre* was with us; he fell there close to the palm,” he whispered. “If he lives he will come. Our Lady bless you, Señor.”

I hastened to the spot he had indicated, picking my way over the slain and I found

the *padre* still living, propped with his back against a tree, a dead man's head upon his knee.

"Come," I cried eagerly, but he shook his head. He was a large man with a keen, dark face and white hair which made his black eyes seem the more piercing, and his face was singularly young for his silvery locks.

"I am dying, lad," he said, as I offered to raise him. "My leg's broken, and there's something wrong inside." As he spoke I saw the blood flowing from his side. "This poor fellow," pointing to the man at his knee, "asked me to live till he died, and I tried to oblige him, sure." There was no mistaking the rich, soft voice, and the twinkle of the laughter-loving eyes yet even in the stress of so much horror, I could not help wondering what an Irish priest was doing here.

"Could I carry you over yonder?" I asked anxiously. "There's a dying man begging for a priest. I don't know if he's a Cuban or Spaniard, but—" he interrupted me with a smile—

"But either of them is likely to have sins

to confess? We all are, my boy. But this is a different proposition entirely. Be a crutch for me and I'll get there, please God," said he as cheerfully as though he were proposing a little pleasure excursion. He laid on the ground the body of the poor fellow he had held, making the sign of the cross over him, then with my help he managed to get upon his feet. I was too slight to carry him, indeed, enfeebled as I was by my hard journey, with the fever coursing wildly in my veins, it was all I could do to support his heavy frame.

We struggled on. To him each step was agony for the chords stood out like knots upon his forehead, and his face was ashy white and drawn. Thirteen times we stopped to rest, and I called to the wounded man that we were coming. The *padre* gave a groan or two, then stifled them and muttered to himself, "The Way of the Cross—for Thee, *Domine!*"

At last we reached our goal and found the man still alive. The priest sank down beside him exhausted, and I quickly gave each of them a draught from my flask, then withdrew out of ear shot. In a few moments I

was recalled and found the priest looking terribly white and exhausted while the dying man had an expression of peace through the suffering of his face.

"I thank you, Señor" he gasped. "You have made death easy. Pray for — — ah, *Jesu—Maria!*" one groan, and he was dead.

Silently I gazed upon the still features, murmuring a prayer for the brave soul, and the priest said sorrowfully, "A Spaniard, forced to fight against his will; too poor to buy the *permeso* to stay at home. Ah, war is cruel!"

"And you, Father—let me help you. Why are you here? For Cuba?" I asked.

"For Cuba? No, for God!" he said solemnly. "I'm past helping, lad. I'm here because if men *will* kill each other's bodies, the noblest thing is to try and save their souls for God. Where are you going?"

"To Lopez, with despatches," I answered simply.

"You cannot reach him," was the reply. "The Spaniards are between you. Here, lad, I shall be dead in a few minutes; I'll let my mantle fall on you," how faint were the cheery, almost whimsical tones! "Take my

cassock and rosary—all—they'll pass you anywhere. If you've a message for Lopez put it in my pipe, and if you're caught, smoke it. I'll say a prayer for — — Ah, *Jesu*—the pain!" a paroxysm seized him, and he writhed in agony too terrible to witness.

"*Domine, in mane* — —" he murmured faintly, a great gush of blood poured from his mouth and he was dead, brave soldier of the Cross!

There is little more to tell, Captain. I obeyed his instructions to the letter. Clothed as a priest I escaped to Lopez with the message in my pipe. For the time it saved him, but all the world knows the rest of his unhappy story.

The brave Cuban was surrounded, conquered and garroted at Havana by Concha, stern, unyielding Concha.

Crittenden was already dead. The leaders of the ill-fated expedition were killed or scattered over the island, starving or dying of wounds. I escaped almost by a miracle and reached America more dead than alive, owing my life to the garb of the Irish priest who had died at El Frio.



His words clung to me day and night.

"For Cuba? No, for God! I leave you my mantle, lad." I could not get the words out of my mind. I owed my life to the priestly garb, to it I would dedicate what remained of my days. So I became a priest. I was chaplain in the Civil War and now, Captain, I want to go with you to Cuba.

I am too old? I have the fewer years of usefulness to lose if I am killed. I am a soldier of the Cross, and my place is in the ranks.

'If men *will* kill each other's bodies the noblest thing is to try and save their souls for God,' is it not so, Captain?



## PEPITA.

PEPITA cried.

It would, perhaps, be more poetic to say wept, but it would not be so truthful. A fine lady weeps, civilly, over the sorrows of a friend, or designingly when the masculine eye seems blinded to the end she has in view. Traces of weeping may be gently absorbed by embroidered cambric, and scarcely mark the most delicate skin. But Pepita cried, and crying involves swollen eyelids, puckered cheeks, and general dishevelment. Indeed, with Pepita it often meant to throw fan and kerchief on the floor, and fling herself after both in a genuine rage.

All this was very trying for Pepita's people, but they had learned early in their experience with her that it was rash to appear before her when she cried. An unwary entrance or an attempt at consolation at the wrong moment, was sure to provoke a more severe storm, and often the throwing of fan or kerchief at the intruder.

On this particular morning Pepita cried uninterruptedly. Aunt Teresa was making

a mango omelette for breakfast, Miguela was trying on her new mantilla, and Dolores, the good elder sister, was sewing bows on Pepita's red slippers. The three sisters lived in Madrid with their aunt, a rather unpleasant old woman, as sour as an unripe pomegranate. She rented the upper stories of her house, and, their store of *reales* being small, the girls sewed fine embroideries for the Sisters at San Spirito. At least, the two elder ones did, for Pepita had never done anything in her sixteen years but look pretty. This accomplishment was hers to such perfection that nothing further was required of her. Her great black eyes were soft yet spirited, her olive cheeks flamed with scarlet, and her mouth was fairly bewitching in its tender, laughing curves.

When she had sufficiently indulged her luxury of misery, the little Madrid maid sat up, looked about her, and wished for some one to whom she might impart her troubles. Her nature was not one to let concealment prey upon her cheek, and fortunately at this moment Dolores' entrance with the red slippers proved a happy diversion. Pepita thrust forth a slender foot in a thin black stocking.

One pink toe had put itself forward in a very rude way through the hose, but it did not mar the symmetry of the pretty foot.

"My angel!" said Dolores tenderly, "do the slippers please thee?"

"Yes, yes," said Pepita, slipping her foot in and out of the gay footgear, exquisite with its high heels and silver braid trimmings.

Dolores looked pleased. Perhaps this was more than a temporary lull. "Thou wilt wear them in the Prado to-night," she said unwisely.

Pepita's face clouded, and she gave the slipper a toss into the air.

"I shall not go to the Prado," she pouted.

"No! Then perhaps on Sunday to the fight," hazarded Dolores.

"Nor to the fight," said Pepita emphatically. "I hate a bull-fight!" clicking her fan impetuously.

"Hate the fight! Pepita, what are you saying?" and Dolores patted the little maid's head, and gazed at her anxiously.

"You will not tell Miguela?"

"Never!"

"Nor any one?"

"No one!"

Then came the outburst, "Oh! Dolita *mia*, I am so angry! Each night when I sat on the balcony Manuel Garzalez has come and stood by the pomegranate. Often has he looked at me and played his guitar. Once he sang such lovely words. Then in the *Puerta* he came close to Aunt Teresa and me, and he said something very softly, about—about the rose in my hair. You know the crimson rose that grows beside the *asoca* tree in the garden? It was a bud from it that I wore, and he whispered that the red rose was not brighter than my cheeks. Aunt Teresa scowled like a blackamoor. Oh! he was just like a real *novio*, and I think when Miguela has only two years more than I, and she's to be married next month, surely I am old enough for a sweetheart; am I not?" and Pepita examined her sister's face eagerly.

"I know not, dear heart, if thou art old enough," Dolores replied, "but tell me why thou art so sad."

"Well," Pepita continued, and there was a pathetic droop to her mouth, "last night you were all gone to the *Prado*, and I was left alone. I sat on the balcony late, but Manuel came not. Then I thought he had

been busy at the ring, for the big fight comes on Sunday, and Señor Martinez often keeps Manuel to prepare the ribbons for the *banderillos*! But just before you came home he passed by and did not stop even a moment. And this morning, as I sat by the window he went down the *Calle della Regina*, and he did not glance up once. And, oh! Dolita *mia*, when he passed the next house where the *Americanos* live, he stopped, and from the second balcony some one threw him a rose. He put it in his cape and smiled and went away. *Virgen Santissima!* he does not like me any more, and I had thought it would be so nice to have a real sweetheart," and Pepita burst out crying again, and hid her face in Dolores' lap.

Her sister smiled a little at the child's vehemence, and stroked the silky black hair. "My angel, weep not," she said. "See, Manuel is a handsome lad, but truly, he is not for thee. Thy mother was a Sanchez, and, Pepita *mia* a sweetheart thou shalt have, but not Manuel. He is only a *Gallegos*, and thou knowest well the people of his province are no match for Andalusia. Come, little bird, dry thy tears. Surely at Miguela's

wedding the bridesmaid will be as fair as the bride, and thou shalt have a new mantilla. But for this I must embroider more of those vestments Sister Eulalia likes so well. Wilt help me, sweet?" The sisters left the room, Pepita first powdering her face and hair, an offering upon the shrine of vanity which a Spanish girl seldom omits.

The *Americanos*, as Pepita called them, lived in the house next to the white-walled garden of the Señora Fuentes. A political upheaval at home had sent Carey Wentworth as consul to Madrid. The Spanish character is often too reserved to be hospitable. In Spain one of their grievances against foreign governments is that usually their representatives are forced to a medium of French for their conversation. But if you speak Spanish, and have an old-fashioned Southern manner, the dons will forgive your being a stranger, always provided you are not English. The British Lion roars too loudly for Castillian ears, and when he lashes his tail he has a way of striking his neighbors which is detrimental. And then, there is Gibraltar, you know!

But Carey Wentworth knew Spanish from

a long residence in Mexico, and his Southern ways came to him by ordinary generation from his mother's people, so he had settled himself comfortably in Madrid, prepared to enjoy his four years, possibly eight, in that most charming of capitals. On this particular morning he was sitting on his balcony, smoking, and reading *España Moderna*. He had been a witness to the defection of Manuel, and a listener to the laments of Pepita. He smiled in a slightly cynical way, and leaned over the parapet, just in time to see the two girls enter their garden arm in arm. They glanced up for a moment and met his gaze; and he exclaimed as they passed swiftly out of sight among the orange trees, "By Jove! what a beauty the little one is! I don't think well of Manuel's taste, if he prefers any one else to her! I wonder if anything could fan to flame the ashes of my bachelor heart," and Carey Wentworth, thirty-seven years old, with a dash of snow on his temples and a few crow's-feet at the corners of his keen blue eyes, gave a sigh as he looked dreamily down where the roses climbed over the wall between his garden and that of the Señora Fuentes.





It was Sunday. Not a calm Puritan Sunday such as had flourished in the New England village where Carey Wentworth was born; not even a metropolitan Sunday, with churches and saloons vying with each other for victory; but a gay, vivid, glowing Spanish Sunday. There was Mass in the morning, for the Spaniards go to church at least once a week, and in the afternoon there was the bull-fight, and every shop was closed. A stream of people flowed past the *Puerta del Alcala* toward the ring. Such a waving of fans, fluttering of mantillas, and chattering of tongues! The fight is at its bravest in Madrid, and is dear to the heart of every Castillian.

Towards evening the consul sat on his little balcony, observing but unobserved. In the soft spring twilight the callas and violets sent their clinging perfumes to him from the prim beds in the gardens below. To the man tired with the activity of American life there was something inexpressibly attractive in all this peace. Dolores was sitting by the orange tree. She had laid aside her embroidery, and was reading a quaint old missal in a worn binding. Dolores

was three and twenty, very, very old for a Spanish girl. She had once had a sweetheart, but he had drawn a low number when the yearly lot for soldiers was cast, and had been sent to Havana. Of course he never came back, and that was long ago, before her mother died. Since then, Dolores had worked; for Aunt Teresa was not generous, and the girls needed so many things.

Dolores leaned her head on her hand, and a thoughtful look came into her deep brown eyes. How should she manage it all? There was the purple altar-cloth with gold arabesques; at least thirty *pesetos* *Sorella* Eulalia had promised for that. The dozen mats, with flowers in different colors, were to go to the shop in the *Puerta del Sol*. There would be twenty more for them; fifty *pesetos* for this week's work, and as much more for the next.

"For myself, it matters little," she murmured, as she smoothed her worn black gown. "But Miguela's bridal box must be filled, and Pepita, the darling, shall have a new mantilla." Her dreams were interrupted by the clang of the garden door; and Pepita, glowing with delight, danced up to her sister.

"Oh, Dolita! That you had been with me! Such a fight! We sat very near, and *Dios!* but it was fine! If I have not a sweetheart, I thank the Virgin Miguela has one, since he will take us to the fight! Even Aunt Teresa was pleased! Four bulls! only think of it! Manuel was there, but I—oh! I never noticed him!" and Pepita gave a little shrug, though there was a misty look in her black eyes. "Martinez, the best matador, fought," she went on quickly; "and at the last, when he killed the fourth bull, everybody sprang up and shouted! And oh! he smiled and bowed; and when we came away, I passed quite close, and he took some ribbons from the banderillos and tossed one right to me!" and Pepita held up in triumph the scarlet and gold trifle.

"My angel, I am pleased that you were happy!" said Dolores. "But were you not sad for the horses and the poor bulls?"

"A little, yes; the blood was dreadful! But, oh! it was so exciting and splendid! I have never been so gay," and Pepita, raising her skirts a little, danced the gavota gracefully, clicking her fingers like castanets, and singing merrily.

"Thou art a wild bird, my Pepita," said

Dolores, smiling, and her sister sank down beside her, and fanned her flushed cheeks with the end of her mantilla.

"Dolita, what have you been sewing?" asked Pepita when she regained her breath.

"A green and yellow parrot on this scarlet velvet," said Dolores.

"Why sew on such an ugly thing?"

"It is for the English doctor's wife. She called it 'tropical,' and I heard her tell her husband I would be sure to like it, for the Spaniards liked glaring colors." Artistic Dolores smiled a little cynically.

"I should have flung it at her feet!" exclaimed Pepita.

"No doubt," said Dolores calmly; "and where would I get the money for your next gown?"

Pepita was silent a few moments, then she said suddenly:—

"Do you remember the very fine altar-cloth you made for *Padre Placido* last year?"

"The one which was stolen from San Josef? Yes, why?"

"Why? oh, the drollest thing has happened. To-day as I sat by my window, I heard the *Americano's* servant talking in a very excited

way to his master on the balcony. 'The *mozo* said he had brought the drapery, 'really an antique, made by the holy nuns in the convent of San Spirito quite a hundred years ago, and very valuable.' It was dreadful in me, and I very well know you'll scold, Dolita *mia*, but I could not help it, and I peeped. Truly, it was the same altar-cloth you made!'"

"How did you know?" asked Dolores.

"I saw the place in the corner where my finger bled. You remember the paroquet bit me and I snatched the cloth, and oh, how angry you were! Then you covered the spot with a tiny gold heart. I could see it plainly. Is it not droll?" and Pepita's laugh rang out merrily.

Carey Wentworth, from the balcony above, heard the dialogue and glanced grimly at the "famous antique" he had been beguiled into buying.

"A souvenir of our pretty neighbors, it seems," he muttered. "Dyed in the blood of the Sanchez!" and he pulled his blonde mustache. But just at that moment he heard a scream, and quickly jumping up, he looked below, on a scene of great excitement. Pepita

stood on a stone bench, her gown in one hand, her feet drawn just out of reach of a huge mastiff, who snapped at her viciously.

Dolores waved her scarlet velvet, and tried to attract his attention, and the brute rushed at her, chasing her round and round the garden. With Wentworth, to think was to act. Snatching a riding whip from the table, he swung himself over the balcony, on the wall, into the garden, and after a vigorous chase he banished the intruder from the scene, closing the gate after him with a triumphant bang.

Dolores had sunk exhausted upon a bench; but Pepita, running toward him, said, "Oh, Señor, what an adventure! But it was droll! First the great dog mistaking my slippers"—coquettishly displaying a tiny foot—"for something to eat. Then Dolores flying about the garden, her scarlet cloth waving like a flag; the great beast after her, and the señor after him!" and Pepita laughed gayly.

"*Quita! Quita! Pepita mia,*" chided Dolores. "Thou art a wild bird and an ungrateful one! Thank the señor for coming to our aid."

"*Gracias, Señor, gracias,*" said Pepita. "Here is a flower from my red rose tree to reward you."

Wentworth took the rose. "The flower and the smile are too great payment for so slight a service, Señorita," he said. At that moment Aunt Teresa, with Miguela and Piero, her betrothed, entered the garden. A few words of explanation, and soon all were chatting pleasantly. The consul felt thoroughly at ease with his new friends; but while he talked to all, he looked at Pepita.

Manuel's guitar was played very sweetly under the windows of the Señor *Consulado* that night. The patience of the lover was soon rewarded, for on this night shortly after his defection from Pepita, a window was opened, and five white fingers dropped a little glove at his feet.

The weeks which followed were pleasant ones for Carey Wentworth. He saw his neighbors nearly every day, and he found intercourse with them very novel and enjoyable.

He made state calls in the dark *sala*, with its high backed chairs and antique carvings. He lounged in the cool *patio*, where even at midday the sun was not too hot, and only shed a softened light between the white columns, and delicately outlined the shadows

of the palms on the white-flagged floor. He smoked in the secluded garden among the myriad perfumes of the flowers, where the hum of insects almost drowned the city's din without.

Miguela's wedding was over, and she went to live in the upper apartment of Piero's father's house, only three streets away, across the Puerta. The same quiet life went on in the *Casa Fuentes*. They were always the same, these Spanish women, Wentworth thought. Grave Aunt Teresa was less bitter to the Señor *Americano* than to others. Dolores was calm and sweet, and her restful presence gave quiet happiness. Pepita was the same in that she was always different. Wentworth grew to watch her varying moods. Grave or gay, merry or sad, one moment an angel, the next a veritable little fury, she was a charming, maddening piece of flesh and blood. Each mood and tense teemed with contradictions, and each in turn seemed more fascinating than the last.

"Verily, what a fool is Manuel," said Wentworth to himself, for Manuel's defection continued. Since he had seen against the window-pane the cameo profile of the *Ameri-*



*cana* and heard a soft voice from the balcony, Manuel's ardent fancy was aflame.

He never saw the consul's beautiful sister, as he thought her, but had he not a rose and a glove from her white hand? And so each evening his guitar and his fine tenor voice were heard beneath the balcony of the *Americanos*. Pepita, looking out from her latticed window, would clench her little fists and cry herself to sleep. Dolores thought her sister ill, but only worked the harder, that she might send her away before the worst heat came. Wentworth, in American fashion, tried to tempt the little maid's flagging appetite with dainties, forgetting that Spanish girls care nothing for sweets. He brought her fresh figs in fancy boxes; the largest olives from the famous groves at Alcaya Real; boughs heavy with golden orange disks. He had but to hear a wish from her to fulfil it. But each day Pepita grew paler. She was not ill: "Sometimes a pain just here," she said, laying her hand on her heart. "But that is nothing," and she danced from flower to flower, making wreaths for Wentworth's hat, or sat listening, like Desdemona to tales of his far away country.

More liberty is allowed to Americans in Spain than to any other people; for their genial, kindly natures seem to appeal to the reserved Spaniards. So the days passed by, and all who saw them thought the consul in love with fair Pepita. One afternoon toward the end of summer, Mr. Wentworth came to the garden where the girls were seated bringing a bunch of roses for Pepita. As she went to arrange them, he called after her, "Pray wear the white roses for me, Señorita," and a gay "*Si, Señor,*" was the response. He sat at Dolores' side on the stone bench under the *asoca* tree, whose gay bells swayed in the soft breezes.

"Señorita," he said suddenly, "I have something to tell you."

Dolores raised her eyes expectantly. She was chary of her words, but an excellent listener. He continued:—

"You know Manuel Garzalez?"

"Yes," she said, surprised at the question.

"He has taken to serenading us for the last few months, and every evening has stood beneath our windows with his guitar." Wentworth's eyes twinkled, but his voice was grave. "It occurred to me it would be

civil to thank him for his beautiful music, so last night I called to him and said, 'Señor, will you not come in and let us thank you for your kind attentions?' He seemed surprised, but entered. When we reached the *sala* I said,—

" 'You must allow me to introduce you to the lady you have been serenading. Señor Garzalez — my mother — the Señora Wentworth.'

"Manuel looked astonished and disappointed when he saw her; and yet my mother, with her clear-cut features, her brown eyes and snow-white hair, is even now at sixty considered a beautiful woman. He left us very quickly, after my mother's gracious thanks for his music. Pausing at the door, he asked, 'But, Señor, the rose, and the glove?'

" 'The reward of fickleness,' I said sternly. 'I threw them down to you.' What do you think of him, Señorita?" Wentworth asked, in conclusion.

Before Dolores could answer, a voice interrupted.

"Take your flowers, Señor *Americano*. I will not wear them," and Pepita snatched

the roses from her belt and threw them at Wentworth's feet. "I overheard it all! You are—oh! I hate, hate, hate you!" and Pepita, scarlet with rage, burst into tears and ran into the house.

"*Maria Santissima!*" exclaimed Dolores. "What is the matter with the child?"

"Do you not know?" said Wentworth gravely. "She loves Manuel."

Dolores was silent. A thousand incidents flashing into her mind gave coloring to his words. Wentworth stretched out his strong hand and took one of hers. "And I," he said quietly but earnestly, "I love you, Dolores!" Dolores started. She tried to pull away her hand, but Wentworth held it fast. Dolores was silent a moment then looking up at him: "I thought it was Pepita," she said.

"It is not Pepita. It is Dolores," he answered.

She said nothing, but they sat side by side, her hand in his, and a great calm stole over them both.

It seemed to Dolores as if the golden rays of the setting sun had brought a glory into her dark existence; and when the Angelus called to prayer, she heard it not.

But Pepita knelt in her little white-hung chamber, and prayed:—

“*Padre Santo*, bring Manuel back to me again!”

And as she dreamed amid her prayers, once more upon the summer air there came beneath her window the tinkle of Manuel’s guitar.



## ON THE WAY TO MADRID.

I HAD been travelling from Paris fifteen hours, and was ill-disposed to welcome any intrusion upon my solitude when, as the train moved slowly out of the railway station at Bayonne, the carriage door was thrown open, and the guard thrust some one within.

I had but time to stifle an exclamation of impatience as I saw that it was a woman, when a pair of eyes fixed themselves upon me. They were peculiar eyes; not remarkably large nor dark, nor heavily fringed in black, as are those of the modern heroine. It was the expression rather than the form or coloring which struck me; there was a mingling of emotions in the gray orbs under the filmy veil. Fear warred with pride, timidity with self-reliance, sweetness with hauteur, until a keen relief flashed across the dilated iris, and the eyes which had sought mine with an unconscious intensity, dropped their gaze, and my companion settled herself in her corner.

It was early morning. As we crossed the Niève the sun was breaking through a heavy bank of clouds upon my right, and it lighted up the Gothic Cathedral, remnant of the English in Gascony.

The train moved swiftly along, and we had a fine view of the rugged Pyrenees, rearing their haughty heads against the turquoise sky.

My companion seemed to gaze unseeingly upon the landscape, and I—interested I scarce knew why—watched her furtively.

Her figure was unusually slender, with that lithe grace which artists admire, and she was dressed in the plainest of blue gowns. There was nothing about her either striking or especially attractive. She appeared to court unobtrusiveness and I should probably have failed to notice her, save for the startled eyes which had seemed to compel, yet dread attention.

At last she moved a little as if conscious of my scrutiny, then drew off her gloves and tried to lower her window sash. I noticed that her hand was large, but white and well kept, innocent of jewels although a wedding ring gleamed upon her finger.

Churl-like, I hesitated before offering to

assist her, a courtesy often the opening wedge to an acquaintance. Suddenly an exclamation of pain met my ear, and I saw that she had caught her finger in the window. An instant later she sank back upon the cushions, deadly white and totally unconscious.

I was never a carpet-knight, and I knew little of women, yet here was I, half an hour from any stopping place, alone with a woman who fainted at a scratch. What to do I knew not.

I thought anxiously of my small stock of remedies. Mustard-plaster? That would not answer. Brandy and Soda? Stay, whiskey might do. Letting down the window still further to give her all the fresh air possible, I managed to push aside her veil with fingers which fumbled sadly over their unwonted task, and forcing a few drops of the liquid between her lips, I supported her uneasily.

At last her slender frame gave a tremor, her breath came in little gasps, and slowly her eye-lids unclosed, and I met again that strange gaze.

A bright flush overspread her pale face, and she withdrew herself from my supporting arm.



"You have been faint," I hastened to say. "Is your finger better?" It seemed to me that my voice had never sounded so rough, and I grew angrier every moment. What had I, fresh from the Philippines, to do with fainting women?

"I thank you, Señor," she said in English with a rich, foreign accent, half French, half Spanish. "It was not the pain, that is nothing," with a glance at her hand, already red and swollen, "but I have travelled far, and eaten nothing to-day."

Her voice was rich and full, and in its depths there lurked a note of sadness which touched me, strangely enough, for I was unused to sentimentality and women-folk.

"Wrap that round your hand," I said, handing her a handkerchief wet in whiskey; "you must eat," and turning to my hamper, always well filled as becomes an old traveller, I took out biscuits, Bayonne chocolate, olives, and a bottle of sour Chacoli. These, after a quick glance at my face, she took as simply as they were offered, saying only, "*Gracias*, Señor."

I turned aside, yet I could not fail to see how daintily she drank the wine out of a

silver cup which she took from her travelling bag. She ate but little however, and handed me the flask with a gesture of thanks, leaning back wearily in her place.

She had laid aside her hat, and the hair lay in loose waves across her forehead; auburn hair of that rich red which one often sees among the people of the Basque provinces. It was thick, and its masses seemed too heavy for the small, pale face which looked so pathetic as the garish morning light showed the hollows in the cheeks, and the worn lines about the mouth.

She was older than I thought, not pretty, yet there was something about her which held the attention of the most unwilling; a sort of hidden intensity, as if beneath the ice of a frozen mountain brook, the water moaned to be free. There was a look too, as if natural candor warred with a necessity for repression.

"A face with a story," I thought, then—vexed with myself for thinking of her at all—"but what the story is, can be no affair of mine."

I looked moodily out of the window. We had passed San Juan de Luz, a pretty sea-

coast town, with houses like Swiss chalets perched upon green hillsides, and towering above the quaint hamlet, the spire of the church where Louis the Fourteenth married Maria Teresa.

“Sen Jean de Luz, petit Paris,  
Bayonne l'escuderie ;  
Lou Rey que es mourt,  
L'intenden que y es demourat,”

runs the old Gascon song, and unthinkingly I hummed it to myself. A slight smile crossed my companions face, and I stopped abashed.

Soon we came to Hendaye and crossed the Bidassoa where came the custom-house with its tiresome formalities.

When I returned to the carriage after having my luggage examined, I found its inmate crouching in her corner asleep, yet trembling and shivering with cold, for the wind blew in chilly from the Bidassoa.

Taking down my cloak I spread it over her, and closed the window.

How pale and pure was her profile, outlined against the dark plush of the cushions. Who was she? How like a child's her face looked in repose.

That she was in trouble I knew for her breath came in almost sobbing gasps; her sleep was disturbed; she murmured broken words now and then, and I caught an agonized, "I cannot, oh, I cannot!"

At last she awoke with a start, sat up, and brushing the sleep from her eyelids, the child was gone in an instant, and she was a woman, resolute, composed, watchful.

Then her glance fell upon the cloak.

"Señor, you have given me your wrap," she exclaimed.

"You were cold," I answered, apologetically. "I did not need it. I should have kept it if I had."

She flashed at me a keen glance, then laughed. I had not heard her laugh before. The smile spread over her face like a lovely, sunset glow, and her laugh rippled like a mountain waterfall, as clear as a silver bell.

"Ah, Señor!" she cried. "Now I know that you are English. Only an Englishman could speak so roughly, and yet do so well."

I too could not help laughing, and said,

"I am English, Señora, but of Spain on my mother's side," adding, I knew not why,

save that her manner made me strangely at my ease, "I have lived long in the Philippines."

"Tell me of them," she said eagerly, clasping her hands childishly, "all through my life I have loved to hear of strange lands."

"There is not much to hear, and I a poor Othello," I answered, yet somehow, ere I well knew it, with a magic in her eye or tone, her questions drew from me the story of my life; of my boyhood as an orphan in England; of my going to seek my fortune in the Islands; of my strange, wild life with the Kanakas upon the great plantation where, from mere overseer I grew to have an interest in the estate.

Even of my mission to Madrid I told her, and how I went to sign the papers which would make me rich and powerful, since I would manage all the affairs of the largest sugar-plantation in the Islands.

I saw that she was cold again, and wrapped her carefully in my cloak. And then I could have cried out in surprise, for as I turned away she said with too much warmth for so slight a service.

"Señor, I truly thank you," and looking into her eyes, I saw that they were full of tears.

Seeing my surprise she said,

"I am not used to kindness; I am not well, and—" she broke off suddenly, and cried, "Señor, ah, Señor! Have you a sister? She must love you!"

"Neither sister nor wife, nor do I know anything of women," I answered grimly, and as a roguish smile flitted over her face again, "I could not fancy anyone aught, but kind to you, Señora."

Her smile faded into a bitterness which seemed to harden her face into stony lines, and she said,

"I fear you know your sex as little as you do women." Then vehemently, as if a trifle off her guard, "To most men, women are but tools to help them work their will."

"But they need not be tools," I said gravely, a suspicion arising within me that her words meant more than lay on the surface.

"Need not!" she exclaimed, "but what if they needs *must* to save those whom they love?"

"One need never do evil that good may come, and no one would wish to be saved at the expense of a woman's truth and honor," I said, sternly, then—noting her pallor—I added more lightly, "But I fear you are a man-hater, Señora. See, here is San Sebastian with its beautiful church spires, like good thoughts, reaching Heavenward."

She gave me a strange glance.

"Like good thoughts! Surely you are a curious man," she murmured, then sat silent.

I too was still. Sharp distrust was shaping itself within me. This woman told me nothing of herself, yet knew more of me in a few brief hours than the men I had known for years had ever surmised.

From my Spanish mother there was a strain of romance in me which had never before been roused, and I could not banish these thoughts from my mind. Try as I would, close my eyes or look out of the window, there seemed ever before me the pale, pure face of the Señora, a face I could not wholly distrust.

Our silence was broken only by the rasping voice of the guard as he called the names of the stations at which we stopped; long, low,

Castilian villages these were, for we had left the picturesque Basque provinces, and the scenery assumed a wilder character.

I dined hastily at the buffet, my companion refusing food but taking eagerly some fruit which the guard brought to her. She slept again, long and heavily, sighing wearily as she awoke and changed her position.

I could see as her slumbers grew heavier that she had been utterly exhausted.

Toward night I dozed away, but awoke suddenly, conscious of being watched. My strange companion sat opposite to me, her hands clasped about her knees, and leaning forward to gaze at me with the strange intensity she had shown when first I saw her.

Yielding to a sudden impulse I, too, leaned forward, and said as I looked straight into her eyes,

"Señora, forgive me; you are in trouble. Can you trust me to help you?"

She looked at me as if to draw my soul through my eyes to meet her own.

"You are right," she said at length, as if the words were forced from her. "I am in trouble." She drew in her breath with a quick glance of fear around her.



"Will you help me?"

"If I can," I answered earnestly.

"I can tell you a little only; will you promise me never to ask more than I tell, or to seek to know my name or anything about me?" she asked.

"A gentleman never asks what he is not told, Señora," I drew myself up stiffly.

"Do not be angry with me; I am so afraid to speak," she panted. "I must have help, and see—I ask no promise. I trust you. If to-night I am not in Madrid to do what is required of me, my only child, a son but sixteen, but so tall and strong he seems far more, will be drafted for service in the Islands. He is so young and his father sends him forth to force me to do his will. My boy will not live a month in that awful climate, and if he does, the life of private in those camps will soil his white soul forever. How can I let him be dragged forth to evil and death of the soul worse than that of the body?"

Do you know what it would be to a mother to have her son meet with such a fate? Think of it! A paltry sum is all it needs: but sixty pounds of your money will buy the *permeso*

for my Luis to stay. But I—if the money is not paid by noon to-morrow, he must go, and I have not a *real*," she paused for breath.

"But it is against the law, they cannot take him until he is twenty," I said.

"What does his father care for the law," she said bitterly.

"You will let me pay this money for you?" I asked gently. "Do not refuse: you can pay me again, if you wish."

"Ah! you are good, so good!" she cried. "I will work my fingers to the bone to repay you. But—" her eager face fell, then grew white, "he will know, and if I tell him he will kill me."

"Who is he?" I asked sternly.

She gave an agonized glance at the ring upon her hand, and I knew that she meant her husband. Something between rage and pity filled my heart.

"He need know nothing," I said. "Give me the address; to-night I will send the money for the boy. It shall be there before noon tomorrow. He shall be saved. Merely tell him—the one you fear—that you have not paid for a *permeso*."

Hope once more lighted up her face.

"All will be well if you trust me," I added. "What is it?" for she had fallen back upon the seat, whispering faintly, "Stand before me quick! For God's sake do not let him see me!"

We were stopping at Avila, quaint old rock-girt city, pregnant with memories of Saint Teresa. I sprang to the window, calling to the guard that I wanted to sleep and would pay him well to keep the compartment for me, and he locked the door on the outside.

As our train left the station I turned to my companion.

"We have four hours before we reach Madrid. You must quiet yourself, and tell me exactly how I may save your son. I repeat, you are safe with me," I said hurriedly.

"Ah, Señor," she replied wearily, "it is all of no use. It is my fate. I must do as he bids."

"It is no one's fate to do wrong," I said brusquely. "To-morrow the money shall be paid. Where shall I pay it?"

"Go to Señor Francisco Diaz, Calle de Zubida, 2; say merely 'Here is the money to buy *permeso* number 325;' he will I think

ask no questions; he is my friend—if there is such a thing. I shall repay you, if I live.”

“If you live!” I exclaimed with a sudden pang at my heart at the thought that aught might befall her.

“He will kill me,” she said simply. “It is better so, perhaps. He was there at Avila seeking me. Unless I go to Madrid to-night, and do his bidding, a deed so fearful that I dare not speak of it, he will kill me.”

“Then you must not go to Madrid to-night. In a few moments we reach Villalva; there you may change for Segovia. You can pass unseen into the other train, and be speeding away to the north before he can stop you.”

“Alas! whither? I have no home. I was of Monte Haya in the Basque country. My people all are dead. I longed to be a nun for there seemed to me no place for me in all the world. But *Frale* Ignacio said I had no vocation, and Our Lord did not want those who came to Him because, like cowards, they feared the world in which He had put them. Then, Señor, *he* came. I thought he loved me.” All this came in broken

sentences. "He wished a fool! I married him, a mere child, but fifteen I was. Now, where shall I go," she stretched out her hands despairingly.

My heart beat so as to well-nigh burst its bonds; then stood still. In a flash as if of blinding light, I saw that I loved her; loved her blindly, madly, with all the pent up passion of my years of loneliness, with the intensity of my Spanish blood, the strength of my manhood. I could take her to my heart, poor, tired bird, and cherish her there forever. For a moment fierce temptation overmastered me. I looked at the fair, white face all wet with tears, and the anguished eyes upraised to mine. Ah! to kiss away those tears and see her happy!

Then I pulled myself together with a mighty effort. She trusted me! I steadied my voice to something of its old gruffness as I said,

"Listen to me; do you want to do this thing he wills?"

"No, oh, no! I will not do it if he kills me," she cried, covering her eyes with her hand as if to shut out the very thought. "I despise myself for thinking I could do it. It

was my son's life which tempted me. My own is nothing."

"Cannot you tell me what it is? I could prevent it, inform on him—" I stopped at the look of horror which blazed from her eyes.

"Señor!" she cried, "you do not understand! How could a woman betray her husband?"

"You love him then?" I grasped her hand tightly, carried out of myself by her words.

"I *loathe* him!" she answered, a world of intensity in her tone, "But I have promised myself to him until death; he is my—"

"Hush! You shall not call him that!" I cried sharply.

She looked up in surprise, and then a deep flush dyed her cheek as her eyes caught the passion which leaped to mine. No word was spoken, yet she knew that I loved her, knew it as surely as though I had sworn it a thousand times. She shrank away from me, and covered her face with her hands while I flung myself into my corner to think.

She must not, should not be left in his power, and yet—what could I do? Oh! the horrid powerlessness of a man, when longing with all his soul to help the one he loves, yet

honour and duty tie his hands. At last there came a thought so swiftly that I think my Guardian Angel must have whispered it to me.

"You have said you trust me," I said with forced calm. "Will you do exactly what I say?"

"Yes, Señor," she said briefly.

"If through no fault of yours you were in Madrid, yet prevented from doing the will of—" I hesitated, "of the man whom you fear, would you be safe from him?"

"I think so, Señor."

"Then take your cue from me when we reach the station. I will tell you nothing, but I swear to you that I will devise a way to save you. Will you trust me?"

"Always, Señor," was all she said, and my heart beat quickly as I saw the look in her eyes as if a faint hope dawned within her.

We passed the Escorial, dark and eerie in the moonlight, and then I saw the lights of Madrid gleam through the darkness. My companion too saw those twinkling lights, and sighing, she said,

"Señor, that money for Luis—you said I might send it to you?"

"My name is Antonio Leigh; here is my address," I answered, feeling instinctively that I must allow her to send back the money.

She took the card and studied it carefully, then handed it back, saying,

"I dare not keep it, but I shall always remember it."

"Señora," I said very gently, "I have given you my promise not to ask your name. After to-night we may never meet again, if such is your will. Give me a word by which I may remember you."

"We must not meet again," she said firmly, though her soft eyes were dark with pain. "If you sometimes honour me with your thoughts, Señor, remember me as \* '*Esperanza*.' "

"My thoughts shall always honour you," I said. "*Adios*."

She laid her hand in mine, and so gently did it fall and flit away it was as if a snow-flake drifted upon me.

" '*Juan Goicoa va usted*,' " ('The Good Master who dwells on high go with you') she said, in the quaint Basque salutation, and

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\* Hope.



with a rush and noise the train pulled into the station.

The guard threw open our door, and I stepped out of the carriage, leaving my companion to alight unaided. As she reached the platform and glanced about her uncertainly a man hurried from the train, and touching her on the shoulder, whispered something in her ear.

"Pedro!" she cried, starting violently, as in her eyes grew that fearful terror which I had seen before.

It well nigh unmanned me for the part I had to play, but I pulled my self-control about me like a cloak.

Beckoning a guard who stood near by, I whispered to him, and we hurried toward the pair, now about to leave the station. I heard her whisper, "Pedro, I cannot" saw him grasp her rudely by the wrist, and I could wait no longer.

"A thousand pardons, Señor, but do you know this lady?" I asked.

"This is my wife," he answered quickly.

"It disturbs me beyond measure to annoy a woman," I said, "But travelling from Avila I have lost my diamond stud. As the Señora

was my companion it is possible that it may have lodged in some portion of her gown, or —" I paused significantly. She had grown deadly white, but the Señor's face was dark with anger.

"Come, come," broke in the guard roughly, "we cannot talk here all night. She will have to come to the *camera de guarda*," and despite the Señor's anger we were all hurried away to police head-quarters.

Spanish justice is never hurried. I made my deposition and was told that "*mañana, mañana*" I could come and arrange it all. The Señora, meantime, was locked up for safe-keeping. Her husband was allowed to go as I made no charge against him. Giving my address and references I left hastily, without so much as a glance toward her who held my heart for weal or woe, for whom my very soul was sick with longing.

The night was spent in restless pacing up and down and longing for the dawn. When at last it came I hurried to my business. In a few hours all was finished, my papers signed, the money for Luis paid, and I was ready to leave Madrid.

I hurried to the police station to find the

civil superintendant amenable to reason when accompanied by a golden coin or two and choice *cigaritos*.

I had made a mistake, I told him. The diamond had caught in my own clothing where I had found it upon retiring. Would it be possible for him to make my excuses to the Señora? I was too much disturbed by this frightful calamity to even see her. Would he take my address in case that the *Señor su Marido* wished for satisfaction? I was compelled to leave for France by the next train. Would he assume it all? He must beg the Señor to allow me to know if I could make amends in any way, and tell the Señora that a stupid Englishman laid himself at her feet to beg forgiveness that he had caused her uneasiness?

"*Si, si,*" the superintendant would arrange it all, so without a word or glance from her whose voice was as the breath of life to me, I hurried away. Ah! I loved her better than I did myself. Had I spoken to her, said aught to betray myself, her husband might have suspected the plot. From him I was powerless to save her. As the fast express hurried north bearing me with it, wretched

as a prisoner from whom every ray of blessed sunlight was shut out, I buried my face in my hands and thought deeply.

What change had come over me? I, the hard, practical business man, had become a dreamer, a romanticist; in a day as bad as a love-sick boy over a woman.

Women were chattels; to be cherished if useful, cast aside when their utility was past; such was the code of the Philippines. I had never subscribed to it, too indifferent to care unless I saw women actively abused.

But this woman had touched me as none other had,—why I knew not, unless it is that Cupid is a jealous god, and will hold sway sooner or later in every human breast.

My former callousness made it harder for me now, and as I raised my head from my hands and looked out upon the winding Adaja which gleamed like a silver thread among the emerald valleys of Arevala, I knew that henceforth, life for me was empty without her, my love, my *Esperanza*.

Glancing carelessly at the morning paper, a heading met my eye and almost unconsciously, I read the paragraph. "Early this morning a man was discovered in the palace

grounds, and upon his attempting to escape, the king's guard fired upon him, killing him instantly. The man's name was unknown, and there was no means of identification. No papers were found upon him except a torn envelope addressed 'Señor Pedro—' and a passport to France made out in blank. It is thought that he was the emissary of a Carlist plot."

I laid down the paper filled with a strange sensation that this concerned *her*. Then I asked myself what right I had to such a thought, when my promise bound me never to seek to know her name even?

I went back to my work in the Philippines, and grew rich and prosperous. Men said I was more morose than ever. I know not. I know only that when the evenings came, and my work was done, I sat for hours thinking and dreaming and longing with all my soul for *Esperanza*.

Thus passed three long, long years.

One day as I sat beneath a huge banana tree, whose broad leaves shaded me from the sun, a slave brought me letters. There was one in a strange hand. I, the solitary—the hermit—had no friends, and something rose

within me when I saw that letter, and a tightening in my throat bespoke the nervous tension. Slowly I opened it and read, "Señor, he is dead! I send you the sixty pounds. I thank you that you saved my son and me. Have you forgotten *Esperanza*?"

The date was nearly a year back, the post-mark a small town in the Basque provinces.

Forgotten? Had I forgotten her whose memory was all that my bitter life held of sweet?

Long I sat and looked at the lines in the delicate hand-writing. Then I rose quietly and went into the house, and the next morning found me sailing swiftly toward Spain—toward happiness. toward *Esperanza*!



## WHAT BABETTE SAW AT TIVERNEY.

“CIEL! How time flies! It is you M’sieur? It is good to see you back at Tiverney. How long is it? Three years since you and Madame left and here is *le petit garçon* like M’sieur his papa. All is changed at Tiverney, *n’est ce pas*, M’sieur? So many are gone and come no more. There was Madame *l’Americaine*, the kind soul with the handsome son, the artist. Then there came the tall American girl like an iris blossom, with the wonderful bronze hair and the calm brow, and M’sieur Dick and his friend the tall monsieur from over the sea.

“Who was he? Did you not know, M’sieur? But no, it was the summer you left, that he came. He was a poet you know. I sometimes heard the things he wrote. When I posed for M’sieur Dick, *le grand* Monsieur would read. It seemed to me I saw the things he wrote much plainer than all M’sieur Dick painted. For the words flowed on even and soft and I could shut my eyes and see the fields and green slopes of the swamp with its

blue ribbon stream through it, winding down to the sands where the women washed and sang.

“In M’sieur Dick’s pictures the blues seemed all too bright and the greens too yellow, but there, M’sieur, you laugh at old Babette and I know I am only a stupid old woman. What do I know of pictures? *Le grand* M’sieur stayed but the one summer at Tiverney and then there came a thing so frightful that—ah! M’sieur, I wake at night and when I hear the wind howl round the house and I remember that wild October night, I cower down beneath my cover and say quick an *Ave* that the Star of the Sea will save, if there be any in peril like to those others.

“Tell you of it? Yes, M’sieur, but it is frightful!

“You remember the English Mademoiselle who painted Nanette, the pretty picture which went up to Paris and of which every one spoke? Her sister came to be with her, a young lady with hair like the corn silk as it tassels out in soft, fine yellow waves, with eyes like the deep blue cornflower and cheeks like great twin poppies. She was little and slight, and



everyone called her *Ma'mselle P'tite*. It was a brave sight, M'sieur, to see the poet walk beside her. He was so very tall and he would bend his handsome head with its splendid hair, and talk to her, and he said far more with his great gray eyes than all his words.

"*Mon Dieu!* The men are strange! Here was Monsieur *le poëte* with verses and songs at the tip of his tongue and half the world wondering and admiring, yet before a little girl he could say nothing. She laughed at him and teased and smiled upon the others, yet when he saw her not her eyes would soften as she glanced at him. And when she heard him praised she shrugged her shoulders and would say, '*Ma Foi!* he is by way of being spoiled!' Yet oh! the proud light in her eyes. How knew I this? M'sieur, I saw. I am a woman and I was not always old, not always.

"It was a hot summer at Tiverney. The fishing was not good and many boats lay quite idle at the beach. So it was with that of Henri and Jeanne, his girl, took it often to sail the painters and the foreigners at the *Pension Baudry*. You knew Jeanne, M'sieur? She was tall and strong, with arms like a man and

a hard face, not pretty and delicate and tender like the English Ma'mselle, but *bonne, tres bonne*. It was fine to see her take the boat. No matter how great the storm she could bring it safe to shore, and always with a smile on her lip and a gay word for each one. Ah! she was good, poor Jeanne. Why do I call her 'poor Jeanne!' *Eh bien*, M'sieur, you shall hear.

"As I say, she took them out much, the painter folk, and when *le grand Monsieur* came, the poet, he went all the days. Why do I call him *le Grand*, you ask? He was tall, very tall, but there were others who made higher. It was that he held his head so up, and when he talked he threw it back like the young horse of Monsieur Raoul at the Chateau, and there was in his face a high look as if he could not stoop to do a small thing: a look which made a woman feel herself quite safe with him.

"Monsieur — how do I know all this? *Voilà!* I am old, and when a woman is old, with all her life behind her, what makes she but to see and know of others?

"Ah, yes, Monsieur, Babette knows much, much. *Eh bien!* Monsieur *le poëte* went to

make the promenades *en bateau* and Jeanne it was who sailed with him; Jeanne with her strong arms and her rough voice, which seemed all scratched with the salt sea. Yet I have heard that it grew soft when Monsieur spoke to her, and that her eyes which looked the fisher folk so boldly in the face, never sought M'sieur. I saw it all, I, Babette, with my two old eyes so faint and dim. I saw, but said nothing, because I knew M'sieur *le Grand*, and also because I knew Jeanne and how she felt to stir within, her woman's heart.

"Ah! M'sieur, a strange thing it is, the heart of a woman. So long it sleeps, and then at last, when the one who can stir it, comes, *mon Dieu!* the pleasure and the pain! No one can take away the happiness or the misery, whichever is sent. So I said nothing. She was happy, poor Jeanne, because he was there. She saw him, was of use to him, what more need she have?

"But then there came a change. It was when the English *demoiselle* came and M'sieur *le Grand* grew so quiet. Often he took Ma'm-selle *P'tite* to sail and she would laugh and tease and say gay things, and Jeanne would sit quiet, very quiet, and say nothing. But I

saw the heart-break creep into her face, for she felt long, long before the poet himself even, that he loved her, dear little Ma'mselle *P'tite*. I saw but I made no sign, I only said to myself, 'Poor child! The pain has come! It is ever thus!'

"I could not wonder that he loved her, she was so fair and sweet, dear Ma'mselle Aline, and she, with all her merry ways, showed such a tender sympathy for everyone. I heard him say one night, when she scolded him gently for that he had not done his best in what he wrote: 'Your belief in me, will make me good. You bring out all of good within a man, Ma'mselle.'

"Jeanne heard him too, and it made me sad to see the hungry look within her great, black eyes. And so the summer passed and autumn came, the time when many leave Tiverney, and Ma'mselle *P'tite* was to go, for her sister was weary and had painted much.

" 'You will sail with me to-day,' said M'sieur *le Grand*, 'Jeanne will take us, you will not fear though it be rough?' 'Yes' Ma'mselle *P'tite* replied, 'I will go, I fear not.' I liked not to see them go for the sky looked wrong, and winds are treacherous

things by Grandprière rocks, and Tiverney harbor far from safe.

“But Ma’mselle *P’tite* laughed at danger, and they sailed away, with Jeanne at the helm, the boat skimming the blue sea like a swallow with white wings spread in flight. An hour, two hours, and then, without a *s’il vous plait*, down came the storm,—a wind, such as would call dead sailors from the sea, and rain to turn the land itself into an ocean.

“M’sieur, I cannot tell you why, but a dread came to me such as I could never tell. I knew they would be drowned. I hurried to the point, just where the long, low rocks stretch far away seaward from the sandy shore. I knew not why I sought that spot. I know not now, save that Our Lady of the Sea led me there. I crouched upon the point and waited. In the harbor, lights flew here and there, and men with boats waited but a lull in the storm to go out. I knew their help would come too late. I knelt and said my beads and waited—waited, for the old are patient, M’sieur, and I loved them all three M’sieur *le Grand*, and Ma’mselle *P’tite*, but best of all Jeanne, poor Jeanne, child of my people, and M’sieur, a woman who suffered.

“At last there came a lull in all the storm and as I crouched upon a ledge of rock close beside the water edge, I heard a shout and saw the boat. *Sainte Marie!* were they safe? I strained my eyes. Three figures—yes, all were there, *la P'tite* in the bottom of the boat, and M'sieur *le Grand* guiding it. But in a moment the frail *bateau* gave a sudden lurch. The heavy boom swung round and *Dieu!* it struck the head of M'sieur and he dropped quite senseless. *La P'tite* clung to him sobbing. Then I heard Jeanne cry to her, ‘Ma'mselle, the boat must sink,’ and I knew a leak had come.

“M'sieur *l'Artist*, what think you? Will Purgatory be a worse thing than to stand idle and see such a sight? They were to die before my eyes. But no! Jeanne, my brave Jeanne was made of something braver than to sit quietly and die. She tore the boards from off the tiny deck, she lashed them together with ropes; she bound the unconscious form of M'sieur to it.

“‘Ma'mselle, go with him,’ I heard her cry, as her voice came to me with the whistle of the wind. ‘It is your only chance.’

“‘Will it hold both,’ cried *la P'tite*.

“‘I know not,’ said the other. Then she

took M'sieur's hand in her own rough one and kissed it very gently, and sprang to the side of the boat.

"Ma'mselle Aline had seemed to watch her as if dazed, but now she understood, 'Wait!' she cried. She too leaned over the unconscious form of the man she loved. She kissed him once, then reached, as a blind person for the hand of Jeanne, 'We will both die for him,' she cried. There was a moment's awful stillness and I saw the two girls against the luried sky like statues, standing close together; then an awful flash of blinding light, a crash, and fearful darkness.

"I could see no more, yet as I waited trembling and murmuring over and over again the Holy Name, the waves washed something to my very feet and clinging to it and bringing it in, although I had nearly lost myself within the waters, I found the boards from the boat and M'sieur *le Grand* still tied to them.

"I was too weak to bring him to the harbor; I could but wait until help came and when the storm was over they bore him to the *Pension*, not quite dead, but nearly spent, and it was weeks before he knew a soul.

"You ask of the two women, M'sieur, *Eh*

*bien!* Ma'mselle Aline they found next day quite dead, with a smile upon her pretty face, her hands clasped as though she had died with a prayer upon her lips.

"*La pauvre* Jeanne did not die M'sieur. Some sailors picked her up and brought her in and she is *Soeur Marie des Anges* up there where the good sisters at the convent work and pray all day and all night. She is very happy, poor Jeanne.

" 'I go to pray for one who is dead and one who lives, Babette,' she said to me, with such a smile as made my old eyes weep.

"M'sieur *le poëte* grew strong at last and then I told him all.

"Where is he now? *Je ne sais.* He left us with a look upon his face I never can forget. It was as if his soul had gone away.

"M'sieur Dick says he writes more wonderful things than ever, but I know not, for M'sieur *le poëte* comes no more to Tiverney.

"There beside the poplar tree upon the hill lies Ma'mselle Aline in her little grave, and only we two are left, poor old Babette, lonely and sad, and the brave Jeanne at the convent there.

"Happy? Ah! yes M'sieur, I think perhaps that Jeanne is happiest of us all."



## IL SIGNOR' DOTTORE.

“ECCO, Luigia.”

“S’sh, Beppino—less noise.”

“Are the *feluccas* arrived?”

“*Si, si*, but who cares for *feluccas* now? Hast thou not heard?” and Luigia Fiorantini raised the corner of her apron to her eyes and wiped away the tears which stole down her ruddy cheeks.

Beppino looked foolish.

“News—what news?” he asked.

“Beppino! Thou art a stupid! All Francantini knows well what thou art last to learn. I will not tell thee.”

“Luigia” — Beppino’s curiosity was well aroused and his voice took a softly caressing sound—“Luigia *mia*, well know I that I am ‘a stupid,’ and not like thee, little flower. I have been away from thee, and how could I be aught but dull? Now tell me what makes thee and all the village so sad? Thine eyes are like a hare-bell in the mountain dew!”

Luigia was far from proof against such engaging flattery, especially as it was accom-

panied by languishing glances from Beppo's dark eyes. Moreover—women like—she was anxious to be the first to tell the news.

"No wonder all Francantini is dull," she said, "when the Signor' *Dottore* is very ill," and there was in her tone the triumph of one who knows she is making a sensation.

"*Diavolo!*" exclaimed Beppo.

"Thou art ill-mannered, Beppo Mori," said Luigia virtuously, as she moved quickly away to where a knot of women stood beside the worn stone portals of the church.

It was April. From the huge knotty limbs of the horse-chestnut trees hung long, white fragrant racemes which swayed to and fro in the soft breeze. It tossed rose-petals, heavy with fragrance, into the air and ruffled the surface of the blue waves as they played lazily on the white strand stretching in a half-circle from the rocky promontory of Vivieri far, far into the distance toward Carlo Monte. In the center of the crescent lay the tiny village of Francantini—Little Francanti—to distinguish it from its big sister across the bay.

Only a fishing village, but it boasted a good inn and a smooth white road wound through it from Carlo Monte. Many strangers

came to the village, English and American women who scandalized the gentle Italian *donnas* by going about alone or with men! The "stranieri" came to sail in the *feluccas* or to watch the *juscatori* or to clamber over the rocky coast to find flowers.

The peasants did not wonder at their coming. To them Francantini was the most desirable spot on earth. Had they not an *osteria* better than the one at Vivieri, a church with a tall white belfry from which the Angelus rang sweet and clear over the cool, blue sea, and was not their curé the best in the neighborhood? As if this was not enough had they not il Signor' *Dottore*? Even higher than good old *Padre Cervini*—healer of souls—the peasants esteemed the village doctor, their severest critic, their kindest friend.

He it was who saved Giovanni's arm when the huge rock at Capo di Pesce fell upon him and crushed him fearfully; he it was who had watched Félice's Nino when he had the fever, and too, when nearly all the village lay writhing with the cholera it was il Signor' *Dottore* who had buried the dead and nursed the living.

It was he who gave Ninetta the finery for her wedding and the christening cup for Pietro's Toni, and who set the leg of Tito's pet lamb. Neither *mietitura* nor grape-picking were ever held without his spare form looming up amidst the crowds of peasants.

Now, no merry-making was heard in Francantini. Upon the cheerful, busy village a pall seemed to have fallen, and no one sang or whistled at work. The fisher-boats lay idle in the harbor, the men gathered together in knots, the women crouched at their doors, weeping furtively, or crept to the church telling their beads with fervor well-nigh painful.

Even the children hushed their play, running often to their mothers to ask, "*Madre*, how fares he?"

For the Signor' *Dottore* was ill, very ill. All forgot his gruff voice and the cold manner of the man who had spoken ill perhaps, but lived well. They thought only of the many kindly things he had done.

Beppo Mori was just over the pass from Domo d'Ossola, and had not heard the news. At Luigia's defection he pressed close to a group of men talking softly together.

"Il Signor' *Dottore*," he said, quickly, "how goes he? What made him ill?"

"He walked from Carlo Monte all in the rain yesterday, it is a fortnight. He had a rheum, and now a fever. The doctor says he thinks our Signor' *Dottore* wishes not to be well, but to die," said Antoni Moretti, twirling his cap nervously between thumb and forefinger.

"Nonsense!" said another. "No man wishes to die. That is for whining women-folks!"

"I go to see if he makes better," said Beppo suddenly, and turning from the group, he went up the narrow street, stone-flagged and guiltless of sidewalk.

Luigia was just in front carrying herself jauntily, not dreaming of noticing such an one as Beppo Mori. Her adorer's heart sank as he watched her utter disregard of his presence.

"May I walk with thee, Luigia?" he demanded, at last as he caught up to her. She had not seemed to walk so *very* fast, after all. He devoured every line of the face which had haunted him for three years. She was not so much fairer than other maidens. She was

Luigia, that was all, and from her heavy black braids under their linen coif to her tiny feet under the short blue skirt, he loved her.

"I am not to walk," she replied, however. "I but go to my cousin Felicita's in the next street."

Beppo received his rebuff in silence, then said, with the air of one who asks an oft-repeated question, rather for habit's sake than as if hoping for a favorable reply:

"When wilt thou marry me, Luigia *cara*?"

"Perhaps never — or — but yes, when the Signor' *Dottore* makes well," she said, with a cruel little laugh, which showed all her even white teeth. Then she disappeared into the narrow doorway of her cousin's house.

Beppo stared stupidly after her. Then went swiftly up the steep street toward the doctor's dwelling.

One idea took possession of his mind. The doctor *must* not die, for Luigia had said she would marry him when Il Signor' *Dottore* was well. He must recover and speedily, for Beppo was very tired of waiting, and Luigia he must have.

Meanwhile Francesco di Crappi lay sick unto death, at least so said the English doctor from Carlo Monte.

Bettina, his housekeeper, had sent somewhat surreptitiously for *Padre Cervini*, "*Padre Felipe*" the peasants called him, but the good old man had gone to Genoa to to see his mother, a yearly pilgrimage he never omitted.

In his stead had come a younger man — a tall, spare, dark priest, with a strange, keen face which looked as though it had seen many things and lest it prove telltale had let fall upon itself a heavy mask.

*Padre Antonio* was his name, and he sat silently beside the doctor waiting for him to speak.

The sick man lay quiet, his rugged face gaunt and haggard against the white pillow.

At last he opened wide his eyes—dark piercing eyes, with an awful something in their depths—and looked into the priest's face as if he would read his soul.

"You are a priest," he said, at length, "are you a *man* as well?"

*Padre Antonio's* eyes—not unlike the doctor's own—looked back into the speaker's and something leaped up within them, a something which lent a strange thrill to his voice as he laconically replied:

"I think I am."

"It is a *man* I want—no priest. I want to tell you a story not as a penitent in the confessional, but as man to man."

"I will hear your tale like a man and keep your secret like a priest."

"You know I am to die?"

"You will not die now."

Dr. Francesco raised his eyebrows.

"Who knows?" he said, carelessly, "not before my time — no matter. I am tired enough of life.

"But this is what I wish to tell: My parents died when I was but a lad, and left me to care for my one sister, Bianca. I adored her. I grew up loving her and her alone. She spoiled all other women for me, my little white lily!" The man's voice grew soft, then hardened as he continued. "I made her happy until *he* came. I always hated him. He was a stranger in our little Sicilian village, and I feared he would not make her happy. He was an agitator, a socialist, and should have had no wife but his country!

"Of course she married him. Women marry whom they will. Also, of course, he made her unhappy. There was no talk of other women. I would have strangled him with



my two hands for that! It was '48, and you know what things were in the very air in Sicily then.

"He neglected her, and I saw my lily fade before my very eyes and I was powerless to help. *Dio!* is there any hell worse than *that?*

"At last her boy was born. Antonio, for his father, and when he was but a month old my chance came. I knew that Antonio Isoleti was always with a certain set of men. They were involved in a plot against the government. It was discovered. Although I was not sure of Antonio's guilt, I did not warn him. He was arrested, imprisoned, tried, condemned to be shot. It was my fault. Was that murder? If so, it is on my soul—that murder and another — nay — speak not yet" — as Father Antonio made a slight gesture, "wait and hear all. While he was yet in prison Bianca came to me. She begged me to rescue him, to give her money to go to him, to help her. I refused, and in a passion of anger I said many bitter words, and told her how I had not saved him. 'If ever thou seest him again, I will never again see thee!' I said at last. She drew her baby to her breast, she looked at me one long, long look, '*Francesco*

*mio,*' she said, sadly, 'thou ne'er shalt see me,' and was gone.

"I left Palermo, I came to live here. In after years I searched far and wide. I spared no trouble to find my sister and her child. No trace was ever found. She is dead. Since then I have been a stern man, but in all my life I have tried to atone. I never married. I felt I had no right to happiness, and, too, no one was ever like my Bianca. I have done my best since all that passed from my life and now I ask you, have I those two murders on my soul?" and Francesco di Crappi fell back upon the pillow searching the priest's face with his eager eyes.

Outside the swinging windows the twilight was falling and cool shadows crept over the hot sands. The setting sun gilded sea and sky with rainbow hues and the soft air was laden with sweet scents as it swept in from the sea.

No sound was heard in the little room for a moment, then:

"Are you sorry?" asked the priest.

Francesco's eyes darkened, his face contracted. "I do not know," he said, slowly. "Yet if I could live again I would not do the

same. I would warn Antonio—even though it cost me much.”

The priest smiled a slow, beautiful smile.

“Listen,” he said. “The ways of God are past our telling. You *are* guilty of murder, since ‘he that hateth his brother is a murderer.’ Yet the good God overrules even our sins for our good, and you are a better man to-day than before you did the evil deed which has made your life’s remorse. Tomorrow the Easter bells will bring messages of one risen from the dead. Their joyous peals will bring to you, too, a like message of peace.

“Antonio Isoleti was *not* guilty, he was not shot, but rescued by friends and sent to America. There Bianca joined him, there they lived, and there the son grew to be a man.

“Signor’ *Dottore*,” the priest’s voice had grown very soft, almost caressing in its liquid cadences, “I bear you an Easter greeting of love from my father and mother, for I am Bianca’s child!”

Francesco raised himself upon one elbow and looked fixedly at the speaker. “There is a God,” he said at last, “and He is good. Now I can die in peace.”

"You must not die, *mio zio*," said Father Antonio, tenderly. "You have much for which to live."

"What?" said Francesco, faintly.

At that instant there came a hurried rapping upon the swinging casement, and the window was pushed aside as a man crowded into the room and an eager voice said:

"They would not let me see *il Signor' Dottore* and I *must* see him."

"You must not disturb him," began the priest, but a weak voice from the bed said: "Beppo! what wilt thou?"

Beppo went close to the speaker and kneeling, kissed the feeble hand upon the cover.

"*Caro Signor' Dottore*," he began in his most wheedlesome tone, "will you not soon be well? Think how sad is all Francantini! The very children cannot play; the fish are leaping in the sea because no nets are thrown; the harvest will not be because no one has the heart to plant, and all because our *Signor' Dottore* is ill," Beppo's caressing voice grew pitiful as he went on. "And then, then, too, dear Excellency, you know how long have I wooed Luigia, the beautiful daughter of Tito Fiorantini. She would not say the

word to make me happy. But yes—to-day she promised to marry me, but only—‘when il Signor' *Dottore* is well!’ If you die she will never, never say to me ‘yes,’ ” and Beppo’s ruddy face was drawn into lines of grief and anxiety so keen as to be comical.

*Padre* Antonio and the doctor looked at each other.

“Thou art well answered, Signor’. Here is one reason why thou must live,” and the priest’s eyes twinkled with laughter.

The doctor glanced at Beppo’s anxious face, then turning on his side he said, curtly, with his old gruff manner:

“Go down to Francantini and tell Luigia Fiorantini to get her wedding gown and I will pay for it. I shall be well by the Feast of the Ascension,” and he kept his word



## THE EDGERTON'S MAID.

**WHAT** do you think Netta wants now!" exclaimed Miss Letitia as she burst into the sunny morning room where her sisters sat one June day.

Miss Lavinia started as she looked up from her embroidery. Her nerves were weak and she had habitually a puzzled expression.

"How you startled me, Letitia," she said.

Miss Lucretia paused in her work — that of impaling a bright Brazilian beetle on a long pin—and smiled tranquilly. Nothing ever ruffled her lovely serenity. She was always calm, although she had been a cripple since she was sixteen.

She was thoroughly philosophical and a very happy woman. Had she not a hobby? And if she could not walk, at least she could ride it to her heart's content.

It was trying to her sisters, for Miss Lucretia, with the utter disregard for other people's feelings which scientists often show, had chosen as her specialty—bugs! The result was that animals of all kinds in various stages

of development adorned the Edgerton place. Let it once be known to the generous public that any one is interested in a certain branch of entomology, and everything which nobody wants begins to pour in upon the afflicted scientist.

"Miss Lucretia Edgerton likes bugs and things," went from mouth to mouth, and soon alligators from Florida, gay chameleons, kittens and puppies appeared, and even a weird little monkey was inflicted upon the family.

Miss Lucretia accepted with the best grace she could muster but with inward writhings of spirit. For there is no law of nature so stringent as that a hobbyist upon a white horse despises "a gray horse of another color."

The Edgertons lived in an immense old-fashioned house in the heart of the city. All their friends had moved away to more fashionable quarters, but the three old maids were not to be daunted by offices or shops. They clung to their old landmarks and refused to move.

Netta, their little Italian maid, said in her pretty, broken English, "Ze ladies stay and

stay in zeir home. I see not why zey like it so well. It ees so cold and dark. My Italy was beautiful, all warm and bright, but I see it not for five long years!" Then she wept and Miss Lucretia said, "Poor little maid! It seems strange for a child to remember so long! I wonder if she could get me a Pompeian beetle!" This had been a constantly recurring thought to her ever since Netta came from the asylum after her parents died.

So Miss Lucretia looked up at her sister's entrance and said earnestly, "What has Netta done? Have you ever asked her about my beetle?"

"Fiddlesticks!" said Miss Letita brusquely. Her manner was extremely trying at times. She was the mainstay of the family—keeping the house, managing their business affairs and looking after her unpractical sisters.

Miss Lavinia had always been delicate, and since her lover died and she had brain fever, her health had been especially frail and her sisters were as careful of her as they were patient with Miss Letty's momentary ill tempers. The latter continued crossly,

"Netta has something to think of besides beetles. She wants to get married!"



The two listeners started as if a bomb had exploded in their midst.

"Married!" cried Miss Lavinia, and then relapsed into puzzled silence.

"Married!" said Miss Lucretia, "why she's only fifteen."

"Oh, I know that, but she might be thirty she's so cool about it. I never told you before, but she refused the knife-grinder when she was thirteen, the banana-man at fourteen, and now it's an organ-grinder. She had better take him and go along as monkey," and Miss Letitia and her wrath subsided into an armchair, utterly worn out.

The "three Miss L's," as they were called by their intimate friends, looked at each other in silence.

Then Miss Letitia spoke again.

"I don't see why you don't say something instead of sitting there like ghosts."

"Why don't you tell us all about it?" returned Miss Lucretia tranquilly. "How do we know what to say until we hear the story?"

"Story!" sniffed Miss Letty, "I'll have Netta in to tell her own story," and she rang the bell sharply.

In the old-fashioned drawing-room — full and over-flowing with odds and ends of bric-a-brac, and all kinds of ornaments from a beautiful statue of St. Anthony to a nodding Chinese mandarin — the three sisters sat in state, a solemn tribunal, until there came a timid knock. "Enter" said all three and the door opened.

It was a frightened little face which appeared, but a lovely one. The hair, pushed back under a spotless cap, was a warm brown with bright Titian lights and shadows through its depths. The eyes were brown; the skin, too, brown, with a soft, rich glow like an apricot in the cheeks, and the whole face from its dusky crown of hair to the sweet, full mouth and little weak dimpled chin, was charming.

"Did you ring, Mees Letitia?" said the softest of voices.

"Yes," was the reply and Netta entered.

She was small but a plump little creature and the lines of her figure were almost matronly. She stood like a culprit before the three women, her eyes down, her brown fingers twisting the corners of her apron. No one spoke. Suddenly Miss Lucretia laughed.

"Come here, child," she said. "What's this I hear? You want to get married? Nonsense." Turning to her sister, "Look at the size of her and fancy it," she said.

Netta spoke quickly, flushing brilliantly, "Smaller than me does it and I'll be sixteen come the feast of San Guiseppe, and Giovanni says"—Here she ceased abruptly as she caught Miss Letitia's eye.

"Netta," said she sternly, though the corners of her mouth twich'd a little, "tell my sisters what you want to do."

Netta looked down and stammered, "Get married".

"What for?" demanded Miss Lucretia.

Netta paused, "I do—n't know," she said at last shamefacedly.

"Then for pity's sake don't do it, if you don't know why you want to," said Miss Lucretia. She wished to keep Netta. She was a clever little maid, and then if Netta left, where could she hope to get the Pompeian beetle?

Miss Lavinia, however, as a natural outcome of her faded blonde type was sentimentally inclined.

"Tell me all about it, Netta," she said encouragingly, and the maid began.

"I do not like ze men, Mees Lavinia. Zey are too rough. But, Mees, a girl *must* be married, at least"—with the delicacy natural to her race, quickly realizing that her auditors had not seen the necessity for aught but spinsterhood—"my people must. An' so, I sink I marry Giovanni. He play ze organ. He ask a me one year ago. I tell a heem, 'no.' He has only half ze organ, an' Toni Guzzi has ze ozer half—zey both haf ask a me, but I say always 'no'—ze one who gets ze whole organ, heem will I marry! Zey hate each ozer very much. Zey quarrel and work an' zen Toni he fall seeck, vair seeck. He play fair an' give ze one half of each day's moneys to Toni — does Giovanni. But at night he play not ze organ, he stand at ze fruit stall an' turn a peanut roast for Carlotta Tiretti whose man is seeck. So Giovanni he get a more moneys. Now he have ze whole organ. It play six tunes, 'Sweet a Maria,' an' beautiful tunes, an' he say I shall marry heem," and Netta folded her shapely hands and beamed complacently at her mistresses.

They looked at each other.

"Do you love this person—Giovanni, you call him?" finally demanded Miss Lucretia feebly.

Netta laughed broadly showing her even white teeth; then said,

"I know not, Mees Lucretia. I like a heem so well as any."

"But you want to marry him!" cried Lucretia with a tragic tone which would have done credit to Olga Nethersole.

"He like a me." said Netta calmly. "Yes, I marry heem."

"Oh! what's the use of talking to such a little goose," said Miss Letitia. "'That's all I can get out of her. Send her away and we will decide what to do,'" and Netta went quickly away.

Then followed a council of war.

The result was salvation to the Edgerton family, at least for a time.

Netta was told that if she married Giovanni then she would have nothing. If she waited until she was sixteen they would give her a new frock, a wedding supper and a present. There was, however, to be no betrothal. Giovanni was summoned. He proved to be a swarthy Italian with a shock of black hair and blue eyes, pock-marked and by no means an ideal lover.

He agreed to all with equanimity and for a time tranquility reigned in the household.

Alas! it was of short duration.

In a month there was yet another claimant for Netta's hand.

Miss Letitia again held a family council. "Girls," she said, "Netta has another one! This time it's a 'second trombone.' Oh! dear! Let's marry her to somebody and be done with it."

"A second trombone! How absurd!" said Miss Lucretia.

"If you please a, Mees Lucretia," said a timid voice as Netta appeared, "he ees really a harper but he has not ze money for a harp."

"Then where is his money for a wife to come from?" demanded Miss Letitia.

Netta looked distressed, then brightened. "Oh! he get a more all ze time. He play trombone at night an' in ze day he push cart for Frascatie *et Cie.* An' Mees Letitia, Michaelo an' Beppo are come again an' zey want"—

"For Heaven's sake!" cried Miss Letty wringing her hands. "Let them all form a procession, trombone, hand-organ, knife-grinder and banana-man, file past the door and let you take the one you want, but stop bothering me with your lovers."

But Netta was in no hurry to change her present quarters. She was enjoying herself immensely. There was nothing she liked so much as being the centre of attraction. She seemed to have no genuine love for any one of her suitors but to like them equally since all flattered her vanity.

Each man, however, thought himself her favorite, so skilfully did she distribute her favors.

Miss Letty despaired, yet what could she do? Netta's work was perfectly done. She was respectful, modest and neat, a perfect servant. Miss Letitia groaned in spirit and awaited developments. Miss Lavinia made fancy work, and Miss Lucretia was more absorbed in bugs than ever.

Thus the year passed by and the feast of St. Joseph came nearer, the fatal time when Netta must be disposed of to the highest bidder!

One day the sisters sat quietly in their quaint morning-room. The portrait of a Colonial Edgerton in lace ruffles and cocked hat gazed benignly down upon them. Miss Lucretia was deep in a work upon the remarkable development and peculiar formation of

the wings of the Brazilian Aphis. It was a subject of much importance for the insect is not much larger than a pin head.

Miss Lavinia was embroidering. Miss Letitia, having finished her morning's work, was wondering if the marketing had arrived and if cook would put too much curry in the rice.

Suddenly the door burst open, and without any preliminaries, Netta burst into the room, a whirlwind in petticoats.

"Mees Letty, Mees Letty! I must go! I must go! He haf killed himself!" she cried wildly, waving her hands like a wind-mill.

"Who? Which one?" asked Miss Letitia.

"Oh! Zare ees but one, only one in all ze world!" cried the girl.

Miss Letty gasped — "Only one!" she remarked, "when she has kept four men ready to kill each other for as many months!"

Netta stood in an agony. Her scarlet lips twitched convulsively. Her face was flushed and her brown eyes were heavy with tears.

"I must to heem go!" she cried again.

Miss Letty took her by the hand, and said, "Tell me quickly what is the matter."

"Fernando an' me we haf quarrel las'



night. ("Fernando is the trombone," said Miss Letty *sotto voce*). He like it not that Beppo leave banana here each day without *centessimi*, an' that Giovanni an' Toni play before ze house. I tella heem, eef I lika eet, zat ees enough. He go home vairy angry. Jus' now a woman come. She say he die. He haf taken ze 'Ruf on ze Rats,' an' he die. Oh! let me go, let me go!" and Netta threw herself at Miss Letty's feet.

"If it's a case of 'a cup of cold poison,' " said Miss Letita, "I presume I'll have to go," and she was led by the impatient Netta through alleys and by-ways to Carpenter Street. Up a small court, foreign looking with its scores of black-browed, dirty babies and chattering Italians, they sought the house. About the door-step a crowd was gathered, and they hastened within.

The woman of the house explained volubly. Nando had come home very cross. He shut his room—they heard a fall. They rushed in to find him gasping on the floor, a bottle in his hand. They ran for the doctor and he says he will get well.

Netta heard none of this. Her eyes were fixed upon the motionless figure of Fernando

who lay upon a cot in the corner of the room, his face pale as death. With a cry—"He is dead, dead!" the girl flung herself upon the bed.

Fernando's eyes opened; he smiled feebly. "Ah, Netta *mia!*" he said softly, "thou *didst* love me after all!"

At the sound of his voice the girl raised her head, gave one long look into his dark eyes, then crept to his breast as a child to its father, a little bird to its nest.

Miss Letty's keen eyes filled with tears as she turned away and left them.

"What *am* I to do?" demanded Miss Letitia some days later. "Netta is determined to marry the trombone. Giovanni and Toni are furious and talk so wildly that they make one think of stilettos and dark corners. Beppo will put a *garapata* into his next bunch of bananas if something is not done, and Michaelo may grind us all to inch bits in the knife-grinder."

"We will simply *have* to get the firebrand married," said Miss Lavinia, who found this much more interesting than a three volume novel.

"The only way will be to pension the

others off," said Miss Lucretia. This plan met with universal approval. Each man resigned his pretensions to Netta's hand for the sum of ten dollars. Giovanni and Toni disappeared from the Edgerton horizon like comets. Beppo continued to sell them bananas, though he soon set up a corner fruit-stall with the proceeds of *not* getting married. Michaelo married and his wife helped to drag the knife-grinder in its daily round from door to door.

The wedding at the Edgertons' on St. Joseph's day was a great success, and ever after Netta and Fernando flourished like the proverbial green bay-tree.

Miss Lavinia went back to her novels and embroidery.

Miss Letitia devoted herself to the training of another maid and to surreptitiously making pretty frocks for Netta's numerous enchanting *bambini*.

Quiet and for the most part contentment reigned in the Edgerton household, a quiet such as had never reigned since the advent of the Edgertons' maid.

Only Miss Lucretia was dissatisfied and her constant refrain was, "Now, I'll *never* get my Pompeiian beetle."









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